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J O. BATTELY.

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End

A
DISCOURSE

Concerning a
Judge of Controversies
I N
MATTERS of RELIGION.

BEING AN
ANSWER
TO SOME
PAPERS

ASSERTING.
The Necessity of such a JUDGE.

With an Address to Wavering Protestants, shewing
what little Reason they have to think of any
Change of their Religion.

J. Sherlock

Written for the private Satisfaction of some
Scrupulous Persons.

And now Published for Common Use.

With a PREFACE concerning the Nature of Certainty
and Infallibility.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Robert Clavell at the Peacock in St. Paul's
Church-yard. 1686.

DISCOURSE

Concerning the
Judge of Controversies

MATTERS OF RELIGION.

ANSWERS

PAPERS

The Necessity of such a JUDGE

And so forth to Warring Prelates, &c.

By

Wm. W. W.

Author of the

and

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and

THE PREFACE.

When I first undertook to Answer these Papers, I little thought of writing a Book; but when it was writ, I was more easily perswaded to make it publick; for such kind of Objections as these, our People are daily assaulted with, and our Ministers daily troubled to answer; and therefore it will be very serviceable to both to print such a plain Discourse as this, which whatever defects it may have, I am pretty confident, does sufficiently expose the weakness and sophistry of such Arguments.

The truth is, this ought not to be made a Dispute, and the fundamental Miscarriage is, that our People are not taught, or will not learn, to reject such captious Questions as tend only to Scepticism, and deserve not to be confuted; which I think, I may have liberty to say, now I have confuted them; and to shew the reason I have to say so, shall be the subject of this Preface.

It is thought (and certainly it is so) the most compendious way to reduce Protestants to the Communion of the Church of Rome, to perswade them, that they can have no certainty of their Religion without an infallible Judge, and that there is no Infallibility but in the Church of Rome.

Now

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Now could they prove that the Church of Rome is infallible, this indeed would be an irresistible Reason to return to her Communion; but this they say little of now-a-days, this they would gladly have us take for granted, especially if they can prove that we can have no certainty without an infallible Judge, and therefore this they apply themselves to, to run down Protestant certainty, and first to make men Scepticks in Religion, and then to settle them upon Infallibility.

Now the way they take to do this, is not by shewing that the Reasons on which Protestants build their Faith, either of Christianity in General, or of those particular Doctrines which they profess, are not sufficient to found a rational Certainty on; for this would engage them in particular Disputes, which is the thing they as industriously avoid, as if they were afraid of it; but instead of this, they declaim in general about the nature of Certainty; ask us, how we know that we are Certain; if we rely upon Reason, other men do not reason as we do, and yet think their Reason as good as ours; if on Scripture, we see how many different and contrary Expositions there are of Scripture; and how can we be certain then that we only are in the right, when other men are as confident, and as fully perswaded as we? Now all this is palpable Sophistry, and no other direct Answer can or ought to be given to it, but to let them know, that after all they can say, we find ourselves very certain; and that their attempt to prove us uncertain without confuting the Reasons of our Certainty, is very fallacious.

1. As for the first, whether I am certain or not, nobody can tell but my self, for it is matter of Sense, as Sight and Hearing is; and they may as well ask me, how I know that I see and hear, as how I know that I am Certain; I feel that I am so, and that is Answer enough.

2. And

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2. And therefore when they ask me, how I know that I am certain; if this Question have any sense in it, it must signifie on what Reason I found my Certainty; for nothing can create Certainty in the Mind, but that Reason and Evidence which we have of things, as we can see with nothing but Light. Now if Certainty results only from the Reason of things, it is ridiculous to expect any other Answer to that Question, how I am certain, than my giving the Reasons of my Faith; for there is no other Reason of Certainty, than those particular Reasons, for which I believe any thing: And this of necessity brings the Controversie to Particulars. There is no one Reason of my Certainty; because the same Reason will not serve for all things; and therefore before I can give them my Reason, I must know what they require a Reason of, and then I will give it them. And thus we are just where we were; and if they will prove that we have no Certainty, they must confute all the Reasons of our Faith, and dispute over all the Controversies between us; a Task which they are not willing to undertake; and yet there is no other way to prove the Faith of Protestants uncertain, but by proving that they have no certain Reasons of their Faith.

Yes, you'l say, it is proof enough, that we cannot be certain, because we every day find so many confident men mistaken, who yet think themselves as certain as we do, and therefore we may be mistaken, notwithstanding all our assurance and confidence that we are not. Now this indeed would be an unanswerable Argument, did we found our Certainty upon the meer strength and confidence of Perswasion; for men may be very confident because they are ignorant; and we readily grant, that an ignorant Confidence may betray men into the grossest Errors; and therefore though every confident man thinks
himself

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himself in the right, we never think another man in the right merely because we see him confident, which is a plain sign that all men distinguish between Confidence and Certainty. Wise men, who would not be mistaken, are very careful that their Confidence do not out-run their Reason, for Reason is the Foundation of Certainty; and no man can have greater Certainty than he has Evidence for what he believes. Now since men may be equally confident with or without Reason, the only way to try the Certainty of their Faith, is to examine the Reasons whereon it is founded; if we can confute their Reasons, we destroy their Certainty; if we can't, it is ridiculous to charge their Faith with Uncertainty; for that is a certain Faith which is built upon certain and immoveable Reasons; and if the Certainty of Reason makes men certain, and some mens Faith may be built upon certain Reasons, though others are mistaken, then the confident Mistakes of some men is no proof, that the Faith of all men is uncertain.

I am sure all Mankind think thus, who think any thing, which is a good sign that it is a very natural thought. No man thinks himself the less certain, because he sees other men differ from him. The Foundation of this very Argument against Protestant Certainty owns this..

The Argument is, That we can never know when we are certain, because of the multitude of differing Opinions which are maintained with equal Confidence on all sides. Now that this is no plain and convincing Argument against Certainty, is evident from the Argument it self, which confesses, That notwithstanding all this diversity of Opinions, all men are very confident of their own: which I think proves, that every man believes that he may be certain; nay does actually think himself certain, though

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though he knows that other men differ from him; and that I think proves, that they do not believe that no man can be certain, because some men are confident, and yet mistaken. And it is equally strange to me, both that if this be such a convincing Argument (as is pretended) no man should believe it, and that the Advocates of Infallibility should think to impose upon the World, with such a palpable piece of Sophistry as all men despise.

There is no way to prove the Faith of Protestants to be uncertain, but to prove that the Principles whereon we build our Faith are uncertain; for if there be certain means to know the true Faith, then though some mistake, others may be in the right; and those who are in the right, may know they are in the right; for the Mind does as evidently discover clear and bright Truth, as the Eye does the Light. He who feels Truth, will know himself certain, and no man can confute him, without confuting the Reason of his Faith.

This shews how absurd it is to ask us, How we know that we are certain, and at the same time to refuse to hear the Reasons of our Faith; or to attempt to prove that we are not, and cannot be certain, without confuting the Reasons which make us certain. For Certainty results from the Reasons of our Faith, as sight does from light; and men may as well be certain without Reason, as shew how they are certain, without assigning the Reasons which make them certain. And therefore the only Trial of our Certainty is by examining the Reasons whereon we build our Certainty. And this is a plain direction to our People how to answer this captious and sophistical Question. As to shew this very briefly by way of Question and Answer.

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Quest. How do you know that you are certain, or are not deceived in those things, of which you think your selves most certain?

Answ. *What do you mean, Sir? How I know that I understand? Or how I know a good Reason when I hear it? Truly I know this, only as I know how I see; God has given me Eyes to see with, and a Faculty of Reason to understand with, and I trust my Eyes, and my Understanding, and if you can tell me any better way, I shall gladly hear it.*

Quest. But do not all men say as you do, that they trust their own Understanding? And are you not sensible what a fallible thing Human Understanding is? Do you not daily see how many men are mistaken? And how then can you be sure that you are not?

Answ. *Yes, I am very sensible that many confident men are mistaken; but sure this is not the original fault of their Understanding, for then all men must be mistaken; and then we must either be certain without our Understanding, which is to know certainly without knowing at all; for there is no other Faculty whereby we can know, but only the Understanding; or else we must be contented to know nothing; for that knowledge which has nothing of Certainty, does not deserve the name of knowledge.*

Quest. But what is this to the purpose, what the Cause of such Mistakes are? For let the Cause be what it will, if men are still mistaken, how do you know that you are not mistaken too?

Answ. *Yes, this is very much to the purpose; for, if the fault be not in the Understanding, if Human Understandings are capable of knowing Truth, then it does not follow, that because some men are mistaken, therefore all are; nay, it does not follow, that because some men are very confident in their mistakes, therefore no man can be certain that*
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he is not mistaken. For if the Understanding is capable of distinguishing between Truth and Error; as the Eye can distinguish its Objects, then it can know Truth when it sees it; and this is the foundation of Certainty.

Quest. But does not every man, who is in an Error, think that he sees Truth?

Ans. Yes, and so does a man who is in a Dream, think that he sees, and talks with his Friends; but a man who is awake knows that he does so; and though there are a great many Dreamers, you can never persuade a man, who is awake, that he is in a Dream; and there is as much difference between the vigor and distinctness of Perception in Error and Truth, as there is between the delusions of a Dream, and the quick and strong Perceptions of a man awake. And thus a man, who sees truth, does as certainly know that he sees it, as the Eye does that it sees light.

Quest. And do you then resolve all Certainty into your own Sense and Feeling, which is a kind of Natural Enthusiasm, and in most men nothing else but the strength of Fancy and Imagination?

Ans. No, by no means! I feel my self certain indeed, but my Certainty does not result from bare confidence and assurance that I am in the right, which men may have, who are in the wrong; but from the clear and irresistible Evidence of Reason, which pierces the Mind, as Light does the Eye, and captivates the Understanding into a full and immoveable assent. I have such Reasons for what I believe, as do abundantly satisfy me in the Truth and Certainty of my Faith; and when I feel the Evidence and Conviction of Reason, I feel my self certain.

Quest. But still the same Question returns, How you are certain of your Reason? For all men pretend to some Reason or other for what they believe, and

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think their Reason certain, or else they would not believe it.

Answ. Right! and will think themselves certain still, till you have confuted their Reasons; and convinced them, that they are mistaken: For there is no other way of dealing with reasonable Creatures, but to rectifie their Mistakes, and by strong and solid Reasons to confute the vain and empty appearance of it. And if you can do this, I shall very gladly hear you, and when you please, will give you the particular Reasons of my Faith.

Quest. What do you mean? That I should dispute all the Points in Controversies between us? There is a Task indeed! There will be no end of wrangling at this rate; No, no! Since you are not certain, and cannot be certain in your way, I will direct you how you may be certain, without troubling your self with Disputes.

Answ. I beg your Pardon, Sir, I am very certain; or however you can never convince me that I am not certain, without hearing what the Reasons of my Faith are, and proving them to be uncertain; for my Certainty is founded upon Reason, and if my Reasons be certain, what should make me uncertain?

Quest. Do you not see, that Reason it self is uncertain? How do Men differ in their Reasons? What contrary Expositions of Scripture do they give? and what Certainty then in this Way?

Answ. I hope, Sir, you will not say, That there is no such thing as true Reason, or that true Reason is uncertain, or that Scripture truly expounded is an uncertain Rule: Now though other Men reason foolishly, and interpret Scripture perversly, what is that to me, if I reason right, and expound Scripture truly? as I believe I do and,

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shall believe so, till you can prove; that I don't. My Certainty I told you is founded upon certain Evidence, and you can never shake my Certainty, till you can shake that. It would be great and contemptible weakness in me, to distrust the most plain and convincing Reason, because you tell me, that other Men are of another mind; if you can prove, that their Reason is better than mine, I will yield to the best Reason; but I cannot renounce my Reason, while I believe it true, nor suspect it, while I believe it certain.

Quest. When two Men differ in their Opinions, and oppose Reason to Reason; must not one of them be mistaken?

Ans. Yes, it may be both; but neither of them think themselves mistaken merely because they differ from each other, for that would end the Dispute. If the differences in Religion were an Argument against the Certainty of all Religions, there were an end of Religion; for Infallibility it self could not escape, which is denied by more Christians than believe it; and therefore those who would be certain, must look well to the Reasons of their Faith, and those who will prove my Faith to be uncertain, must prove that the Reasons on which I believe are either false or uncertain; and those who are not contented with this, quarrel with the state of human Nature; and may help themselves as they can.

This, I think, is sufficient for a Preface to this Discourse. Let but Protestants maintain their ground, and not be persuaded, that they have no certain Foundation for their Faith, till Papists have confuted the particular Reasons of their Faith, and I dare undertake, they will never see any Reason to question their Faith, nor find any want of an infallible Judge.

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But yet since some Men so despise that Certainty, which results from a clear and distinct Knowledge of things, in comparison with Infallibility, let us briefly consider what the true Notion of Infallibility is, and how much it excels a certainty of Knowledge.

I. First then I observe, That Infallibility belongs to Persons, not to Things. A Proposition cannot be fallible or infallible, but true or false; for Fallible signifies, that which can be deceived, Infallible, that which cannot be deceived, and therefore can be applied only to intelligent Beings, who are capable of either. So that to say, that any Proposition is infallibly true, besides the impropriety of the Expression, adds nothing to Truth; for that which is true is true, and can neither be more nor less true.

Secondly, Perfect Infallibility is nothing else, but an universal Certainty of Knowledge: As for Instance; God only is infallible by Nature; but Infallibility is a Negative, and there are no Negatives in the Divine Nature; and therefore if we would understand what God's Infallibility is, we must reduce it to some positive Perfection, and that can be nothing else but Infinite Knowledge; for this Reason we say, that God is Infallible, because he knows all things, and he who knows all things can never mistake. So that it is Knowledge which is the perfection, Infallibility is only a mode of Speech, to signify the most perfect certainty of Knowledge.

*Thirdly, And therefore Infallibility is not opposed to certainty of Knowledge, with respect to the evidence and certainty of Perception; for Infallibility is nothing else but Certainty, and such a Certainty as results from the most perfect Knowledge of the reason and nature of things, as it is in God, which is only true Infallibility. There is no difference between Certainty and Infallibility in God, and the difference between the Certainty of Creatures and
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the Infallibility of God is this, that the one is a finite and the other an infinite Knowledge; for nothing can be by nature infallible but infinite Knowledge, but a finite Knowledge, which does not extend to every thing, may in some things be deceived, but as far as it reaches it may be certain, and that is a kind of a finite Infallibility. A fallible Creature does not signifie a Being, which can never be certain, but a Being which has not a natural knowledge of all things, and therefore may be deceived in those things which are without the sphere of its knowledge; and therefore it is as absurd to say, That we cannot be certain of any thing, because we are not infallible, as to say, That we can know nothing, because we do not know all things.

Fourthly, And therefore Fallibility, or Infallibility, do not alter the nature of Certainty. What is the Certainty of God, but those clear and bright Ideas of Truth in the divine Mind? for he is not certain, because he is infallible, but he is infallible, because he is certain; and thus in proportion to that distance which is between God and Creatures, our Certainty is nothing else, but a clear and distinct knowledge and perception of the reason and natures of things; and wherever this is, how fallible soever the Person is in other matters, he is certain so far; and to demand any farther Reason of Certainty, than the clear and distinct knowledge of things, is to demand some other Reason of Certainty than Knowledge; and thus we may doubt of the Certainty of God, as well as of Men, if we do not allow a clear and distinct Knowledge to be Certainty, for there is nothing beyond this.

Fifthly, And hence it follows, That as to things which are knowable by the light of Nature, our Certainty results from the clear and distinct perceptions of our own minds,

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minds, and depends on the truth and certainty of our natural Faculties. As for Instance; Those Impressions which our Senses make on us, and those Perceptions they awaken in our minds, are so strong and forcible, that they create a natural Certainty, and we cannot doubt, whether what we see, and feel, and hear, be real or not; those natural Idea's and Notions we have in our minds; those first Principles of Reason and Discourse, appear so plain and Self-evident to us, that we can no more question them than our own Being, and seek for no other Proof of them, but their own natural Evidence; As that both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true; That nothing can be and not be, at the same time; That no Power can make that never to have been, which once was; That nothing that ever was not, can be without a Cause. These Propositions are so Self-evident, that the Mind assents to them without demanding any other Proof but themselves, which shews, that the very highest Certainty of all is nothing else but an intuitive Knowledge, or the Minds seeing and discerning that natural Evidence which is in things; and those who will not allow a clear and distinct knowledge to be the Foundation of Certainty, must reject all Self-evident Principles, which we can have no other Proof of but themselves, at least no better, for we cannot reason in infinitum, and therefore must come to some first Principles, which are known only by their own light and evidence.

Next to this, are those Notions and Idea's, which are so easie and natural to our minds, that most men believe them by a kind of natural sense and instinct, without reasoning about them; and those who have no mind to believe them, yet cannot rid their minds of them; such as the Being and Providence of God, and the Essential differences between Good and Evil. These are the next degree

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degree to *Self-evident Principles*, for they are *natural Notions*, which indeed may be proved by Reason, and must be so, when we meet with men who will deny them; but yet a well-disposed Mind has a natural bias and inclination to believe them, sees them to be true and evident without reasoning about them. This is very plain, the less of Reasoning there is required in any case, the more there is of Certainty: First and Self-evident Principles admit of no Reasoning, Natural Notions require none; and as for all other matters, the nearer they lie to first Principles or natural Notions, the more certain and evident they are; nay, we have no other certainty of the deductions and conclusions of Reason, but their manifest connexion to some Principles and Notions, which may be known without Reasoning; which shews, as I said before, That all natural Certainty is at last resolved into an intuitive Knowledge; and the Certainty of Reason is nothing else, but the connecting those things which we do not know by Nature, with those which we do.

Sixthly, Where natural Knowledge and natural Certainty ends, there Revelation begins; but still Certainty is not Infallibility, but Evidence, and natural Evidence too: For there can be no communication between God and Creatures, as to revealing his Will, but by the mediation of our natural Faculties; whether the Object be naturally or supernaturally revealed, we have only our natural Faculties to know and understand with; and therefore we can have no more than natural Evidence of supernatural Revelations, though this Evidence is owing to supernatural Causes. As for Instance, An inspired Prophet, though he be infallible as far as he is inspired, yet it is not his Infallibility, that makes him certain that he is inspired, but that certain Evidence he has that this Revelation comes from God; which must either be by some external

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and visible Signs, or by some such vigorous impression upon the Mind, as carries its own Evidence with it, which what it is no man can know, but he who has it. As for those who are not inspired themselves, but must learn from inspired Men, their Faith must depend upon that evidence they have for the Revelation; the natural Notion of Gods Veracity is the reason, why they believe what they know is revealed; they must use their own Faculties to understand what is revealed, and they must judge of the truth and certainty of a Revelation from such Marks and Characters as are evident either to Sense or Reason.

So that Infallibility sounds very big, but signifies very little in this Dispute; for all Certainty, whether in natural or revealed Knowledge, must be resolved into Evidence, not into Infallibility. Though an inspired Prophet is an infallible Oracle in those things which he speaks by Inspiration, yet it is not his Infallibility, but that Evidence he has that he is divinely Inspired, which makes him certain; much less can any man be infallibly certain, who is not infallible himself, how many infallible Teachers soever there are in the World. For we may as well say, That a man may be wise with another mans Wisdom, as infallible by another mans Infallibility. Every man must know and understand for himself, and Infallibility is only such a perfect degree of Knowledge as is not liable to any mistakes; and if no man has any Knowledge, but what he has in himself, then he has no degree of Knowledge, but what he has in himself, and therefore can never have an infallible Knowledge, unless he himself be infallible.

Suppose then we should grant, That the Pope, or Church of Rome were infallible, what advantage has a Papist for Certainty above a Protestant? Does the Infallibility

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libility of the Pope make them all infallible? And if every Papist be not not infallible, then they can have no more Certainty than fallible Creatures are capable of, and so much I hope may be allowed to fallible Protestants. The Authority of a Revelation in matters divinely Revealed, answers to natural Evidence in things knowable by the light of Nature; as we cannot doubt of things which are plain and evident to our Understandings, so we cannot doubt of what we know is Revealed by God; but then as we must use our Reason to judge of the natural Evidence of things, so we must use our Reason to judge of the truth, and evidence, and sense of a Revelation, and it is the same Mind and the same Understanding which must judge both of natural and revealed Knowledge; and if our Understandings be not infallible, I know not how an infallible Judge, or an infallible Revelation, which are external things, should bestow an internal Infallibility on us. And therefore after all their brags of Infallibility, Papists themselves must be contented if they can be certain; for if Infallibility did signifie somewhat more than Certainty, yet Certainty is the most that a fallible Creature can have; for it is impossible for any Creature to have Infallibility, who is not infallible himself. And this I hope will make them a little more favourable hereafter to Protestant Certainty; for whatever can be objected against Certainty in general, as distinguished from Infallibility, will as effectually destroy the Popish, as the Protestant Certainty; for Papists are no more infallible Creatures, than Protestants are.

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DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
A Judge of Controversies;
BEING AN
ANSWER
TO SOME
Papers, &c.

The Paper.

I Am not satisfied with the Foundation of the Protestant Religion. For if God has certainly left no Visible Judge of Controversies (as we assert) and yet grant that there are things necessary to Salvation to be believed, as well as things to be practised; and that the Scriptures are to a demonstration not plain, even in what we have not discern to be Fundamentals, as the Trinity, &c.

Answer.

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Answer.

These Objections against the Protestant resolution of Faith, strike not only at the foundations of the Protestant Religion, but of Christianity it self. For if the Dispute were about the truth of Christian Religion, by such Arguments as they can prove the Christian Religion to be true, we will prove the Protestant Religion, which is nothing else but the Christian Religion, purged from the Corruptions and Innovations of Popery. Now it would be very pleasant to hear a Popish Priest in a dispute with Turks or Pagans about Christianity, urge the Authority of a visible Judge of Controversies; and if there be no way to instruct an Idol (who cannot be presumed to own the Authority of any Judge) what Christian Religion is, and to convince him of the truth of it, but by Reason and Scripture, either this is a good way or there is no certain foundation for Christianity; and let any Man shew me a Reason, why Christians may not understand their Religion the same way, that Heathens must be taught it. This was the way which Christ and his Apostles took with Jews and Heathens, and they had no other way to take with them.

The Jews had a written Law, which no Authority could contradict; and therefore our Saviour did not only work Miracles, but appealed to the Scriptures both for the Authority of his Person, his Miracles, and his Doctrine, and left every man to his own liberty to judge for himself, what he must believe; which shews, that Miracles themselves are no Authority against a written Law, for then the Jews could have had no pretence for their Infidelity, and there had been no reason for Christ and his Apostles to have disputed with them out of the Scriptures.

The Heathens had no standing Revelation, and therefore the bare Authority of Miracles was sufficient to confirm that testimony the Apostles gave of the Resurrection of Christ, and the Doctrine which he preached; and those who would not believe merely for the Miracles sake, were convinced by Reason and Argument; for thus St. Paul disputed with the Philo-

Philosophers at *Athen*, as well as with the Jews; and thus the Primitive Doctors dealt with the Infidels in their days, as we learn from those many excellent Apologies they wrote in defence of Christianity. But then those who did believe at first upon the Authority of Miracles, were particularly instructed in the Faith of Christ out of the Law and the Prophets, which though they were originally given to the Jews, yet are the venerable Records of the Christian Faith, to which the Apostles had recourse in expounding the Christian Doctrines.

Thus Christianity was taught at first, and if this be not a solid Foundation, the Christian Faith has none; neither Christ nor his Apostles (though they were Infallible) made their own Infallibility the only reason of mens Faith, but referred them to the Law and the Prophets, which they expounded to the conviction of all honest and teachable Minds; and if they would not believe upon these terms, they must continue Infidels.

And that this way of resolving Faith into the Authority of a visible Judge, was not known in the Christian Church even in the Apostles days (and yet methinks *St. Peter's* Authority, if he had any such Authority, should have been better known in those days, than at such a distance of time) is evident from those early Heresies, which sprang up in the Church. For let any reasonable man tell me, how it is possible there ever should have been any Heresie in the Church, if all Christians had received the Authority of an infallible Judge together with their Christianity, Men might have renounced Christianity and the visible Judge together; but had they then acknowledged a visible Judge, it had been a contradiction to pretend to the name of Christians, and to oppose the Doctrine of the Infallible Chair. Had there been a visible Judge of Controversies in the Apostles days known to all Christians, it had been impossible there should ever have been any Heresies in the Church, as those men must grant, who think it necessary there should be such a visible Judge, to make all men of a mind, and to prevent the rise and growth of Heresies; which must suppose, that the Authority of a visible Judge would do this, or else this Argu-

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ment cannot prove the necessity of a visible Judge: If then the Appointment of a visible Judge would certainly prevent all Heresies, and yet from the beginnings of Christianity there have been Heresies in the Church; this is a demonstration, there was no visible Judge in those days.

Well, but if there be no visible Judge of Controversies, how shall we arrive at any certainty in our Religion? for the Scriptures are to a demonstration not plain, even in what we dare not disown to be Fundamentals, as the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Now, 1. Suppose there are some difficult passages in Scripture, which are not obvious to every common understanding; Can we not therefore understand what is plain, because some things are difficult? Can any thing be plainer than the first and second Commandments, not to give divine Worship to any Being, but the Supreme God, and not to worship God by Images and Pictures? Can any thing be plainer, than the Institution of the Lords Supper in both kinds? than St. Pauls discourse against Prayers in an unknown Tongue? Can any thing be plainer, than what is evident to our very Senses, that Bread and Wine is not transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ? Men, who will believe contrary to the plain words of Scripture, contrary to the evidence of Sense and Reason, which certainly ought to be consulted in expounding Scripture, who would prove that to be in Scripture which is not in it, or that not to be in Scripture which is there, have some reason to complain of the obscurity of Scripture, for the Scriptures were never written to prove what they would have proved; but yet they may be very plain to men, who only enquire what the Scripture teaches, without forcing such Senses upon it as it does not teach: Those, who will prove that from Scripture which is not in it, to be sure must prove it very obscurely, and then to excuse the obscurity of their Expositions, charge the Scriptures with obscurity. Though all things are not equally plain in Scripture, yet all men may understand what is plain; and it is a strange perverseness to say nothing is plain in Scripture, because some things are not plain; or that we cannot be certain of the sense of plain Texts, because there are some obscure Texts.

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Secondly, I do affirm, that every thing that is necessary to be believed is plain in Scripture; for else how should we know that we must believe it, or that it is necessary to salvation? But then by plain, I do not mean, that it is plain to every man, and at the first sight; but it is plain to men who apply themselves to the study of the Scripture, and have skill and ability to do it; and may be made plain to every man, who has the common understanding of a man, without any bias and interest, who will attend to the Instructions of the Learned. And this is reason enough to call it plain, if learned men by study and industry can understand it, and if the unlearned may be taught to understand it. Thus Mathematical Demonstrations are certainly plain, for if a Demonstration be not plain, nothing is; but yet it is not every man can understand them without a Teacher; but since those who do study Mathematicks can understand them, and any man of ordinary capacity, who will attend to the Instructions of a skillful Master may understand them, we may call them plain, though they are not obvious at the first sight. For this purpose Christ appointed an order of men in his Church, whose business it should be, to study the Scriptures themselves, and to teach others, not to impose on their Faith by their meer Authority, which our Saviour has expressly warned us against, to call no man *Master* upon Earth, and which *St. Paul* expressly disclaims being Lords of their Faith; but to open their Understandings, and by easie steps to lead them into the true Sense of Scriptures. Thus he taught his Disciples himself, as appears from all his Sermons; thus the Apostles taught the Christians of their days; and this is the only teaching I know of; for to teach men to believe without understanding, is to teach them to believe they know not what nor why.

But the Doctrine of the Trinity is not plain in Scripture. An Assertion which strikes at the very Fundamentals of Religion, and justifies all the ancient Heresies, which can never be confuted but out of the Scriptures. For is the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Scriptures, or not? If it be not there, how comes it to be an Article of our Faith? and if it be not plain in the Scriptures, how can any man tell it is there,

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when it is not plain that it is there? The Primitive Fathers, who opposed those ancient Hereticks, wrote great Volumes to prove the Doctrine of the Trinity from the Scriptures, and therefore I presume did think it might be proved from Scripture.

This being a Doctrine, which can be known only by Revelation; if it is not plain in Scripture, it is plain no where, and so not the Object of our Faith, unless they can shew us another Revelation besides and above the Scriptures. The only Argument the Paper urges to prove the Doctrine of the Trinity not to be plain in Scripture, is, That *some denied the Divinity of the Son, some believed the Holy Ghost not to be a separate Person, but only an Attribute of God.* That is, what ever some men deny, is not plain; and therefore Christianity it self is not plain, because Jews and Turks, and Heathens deny it. Is the Form of Baptism plainly contained in Scripture, to Baptize in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? and yet many of the ancient Hereticks, who corrupted the Doctrine of the Trinity, would not use this Form, which is as good an Argument, that this Form is not plain, as that the Doctrine of the Trinity is not: And indeed, if one be plain, the other must be, unless we will say, That we are baptized in the Name, that is, into the Faith and Worship of Creatures.

The Paper.

And I think the assembling those Councils we receive as General, shews that their Opposers were considerable.

Answer.

How considerable? For Numbers, or Interest, or Zeal, or Authority? they were inferior upon all these accounts to the general Enemies of the Christian Faith, and why should not the number of Infidels be as good an Argument against Christianity, as the number of Hereticks against any one Article of the Christian Faith? But this is a fatal Instance to the Popish, as well as the Protestant Resolution of Faith, and some,

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Somewhat worse; for the Scriptures never complied with Hereticks, but the pretended visible Judge did, when the Pope of Rome subscribed the *Arian* Confession. But what course did those *Nicene* Fatherstake to confute the Heresie of *Arian*; did they not alledge the Authority of the Scriptures for it? Consult their Writings, and see what their Reasons are; and when such a venerable Council thought the Scriptures clear and plain in this Point, is the dissent of Hereticks a greater Argument, that they are not plain, than the determination of such a Council, that they are? That this was the constant Doctrine of the Catholick Church from the time of the Apostles, was a good confirmation that they expounded Scripture right; but had it been possible that there should have been a Traditional Article of Faith, which the Scripture said nothing of, meer unscriptural Tradition could be no sufficient foundation of Faith, and that for this Reason, because we could not be sure what the Original of such a Tradition was. For the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles give us the most certain Account what their Faith was, and how ancient soever any other Doctrine may be, we have no reason to think it came from the Apostles, if there be nothing of it in the Scriptures.

The Paper.

And that those good Fathers did not think, after their witnessing out of Scripture and Tradition the Belief banded down to them from Father to Son, that the Christians had so much as a liberty of examining after them: Since they positively Anathematized all those that did not receive their Decrees, for which if they had no Authority, the primitive Fathers were the greatest Tyrants in the World to refuse the blessed Means of Salvation to those, that for ought appeared were as sincere as themselves, and the generality of Dissenters made Scripture their Rule, as well as we do. This I do not alledge, that I know of any truly General Council we reject, but this appears to me, that in the best of times there was thought a Power left in the Church without Appeal to every mans Reason; and the Guides of the Church did not think a man safe, though he to the best of his understanding did expound Scripture, if he did not follow the sense of the Church.

Answer

This Paragraph is designed to prove, that there is a Power in General Councils to determine Controversies of Faith without appeal to every mans Reason; and that the Fathers assembled in those first Councils did believe they had such a Power, that when once they had determined what the true Faith was, no man might examine after them. Now whatever the Fathers of the Council believed of themselves, it is plain other men did not believe it. The Hereticks whom they condemned, did not acquiesce in the Authority of the Council; which yet they would certainly have done, had it been the general Belief of Christians in that Age, that the Decrees of General Councils were final and conclusive, to be believed by all men, and to be examined by none: For the most obstinate Hereticks could never have out-faced such a prejudice at this. After the Council of *Nice*, the Fathers did appeal to mens private Reason, in writing Books in justification of the Doctrine of the Trinity by such an Appeal, as is evident from the Writings of *Athanasius*, *Hilary*, *S. Augustine*, and others. Nay, it is strange there should be so many other Councils convened about the *Arian* Controversie after the decision of the *Nicene* Fathers, if that had put an end to all farther Disputes and Appeals; which is a good Argument that the Christians did not then think that the Authority of a Council was so sacred, that no man must question it, when succeeding Councils examined, and many times reversed the Decrees of former Councils; nay, that Councils, which were not general, should make bold with the Decrees of General Councils, which is but a degree removed from every mans private Reason.

But the Council anathematized all those that did not receive their Decrees; and does this prove that they denied all Christians a liberty of examining after them? Might they not declare such Doctrines to be damnable Heresies, and reject such men out of their Communion, without believing their Decrees to be so infallible and sacred, that no man must examine them? Do not the Protestant Churches do this without pretending to such an absolute Authority over mens Faith? A fallible man

man, who is certainly assured that any Doctrine is a damnable Heresie, may declare it to be so; and if he have any such Authority in the Church, he may cast such men out of Communion; and this is all that an Anathema signifies, and all this may be done, and yet men dispute on, and judge for themselves; and therefore to denounce an Anathema, does not prove that he that does it, has such an infallible and uncontrollable Authority, as must silence all Disputes, and captivate mens Reasons and Understandings to his Dictates.

As for that Passage, *That the Guides of the Church did not then think a man safe, though he to the best of his understanding did expound Scripture, if he did not follow the Sense of the Church* it has something of truth, but a great deal of sophistry in it. It is so far true, that a man, who embraces damnable Errors is not safe, how firmly soever he be persuaded of the truth of them, and that it is very hazardous to contradict the Sense, not of any Council, which may be a pack't Conventicle of Hereticks, nor of any particular Age of the Church, which may be very ignorant, or very corrupt, but of the Universal Church in all Places and Ages; but in this Sense it is nothing to the present purpose: And if the meaning be, as it seems to be, that it is dangerous for a man to use his own Reason and Judgment in opposition to the Decrees of Councils, it may sometimes be so, and sometimes not, as the Council is; and whatever the event be, every man must judge of that; it may prove dangerous to a man to use his Reason, if he do not use it right; but yet there is no help for it, but every man must use his Reason, or act like a Fool.

But possibly it will be asked, What Authority then doe I allow to Councils? and I shall very freely speak my mind of it. In Cases that are doubtful, the Judgment of so many wise and learned and pious men from all parts of the Christian Church, is a very probable Argument of the truth of their Decrees; and no modest man will openly oppose what they determine; unless it appears that there was something of Faction and Interest at the bottom, or that the Reasons whereby they were over-ruled, were so weak or ludicrous, as to render their Judgments contemptible: For if the Opinion of one learned man be so considerable, much more is the deli-

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berate Judgment of so many great and good men. Secondly, The Authority of ancient Councils is very considerable, as they were credible Witnesses of the Apostles Doctrine and Practice, and the constant Faith of the Church in the preceding Ages; which is a mighty satisfaction to find by these venerable Records, that what we now believe, was the Faith of the Church in the best and purest Ages; before it was divided by Schisms and Factions, or corrupted with ease or liberty, or wanton disputes. Thirdly, General or National Councils have authority to determine what Doctrines shall be publicly professed and taught in their Churches, and be made the Articles of Church Communion, as it must necessarily be, if there be any authority in the Church. For it is fit that the Faith of the Church should be one, and those who have the government of the Church, must have the care of the Faith. But then this Authority does not oblige any man to believe as the Church believes, and to receive all such Decrees without Examination; but only if we will live in Communion with such a Church, we must own the Faith of that Church, for she will allow none to communicate with her, who do not. Now if the Faith and Worship of such a Church be pure and orthodox, the Church is in the right in requiring obedience and conformity to her Decrees and Constitutions, and those who refuse it, must answer it both to God and Men; if her Faith be corrupt, she abuses her Power in imposing it on Christians, and no man is bound to believe what is false, because the Church defines it to be true. If you ask whose Judgment ought to take place, the Judgment of the Church, or of every private Christian? I answer, The Judgment of the Church of necessity must take place as to External Government, to determine what shall be professed and practised in her Communion; and no private Christian has any thing to do in these Matters; but when the Question is, What is right or wrong, true or false, in what we may obey, and in what not? here every private Christian, who will not believe without understanding, nor follow his Guides blindfold, must judge for himself, and it is as much as his Soul is worth to judge right: For if he reject the Faith and the Communion of the Church without a just and necessary cause, he is a Heretick and

and a Schismatick, liable to the Censures of the Church in this World, and to the vengeance of God in the next. If he reject an erroneous and corrupt Communion, he incurs the Censures of the Church, which in most Christian Kingdoms are attended with some temporal Inconveniencies; and if he embrace it, he is in danger of a future Judgment: For if *the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the Dish*. These are the proper limits of all Human Authority, both in Church and State; below this there is no Authority, and above it, it is not Human Authority; for a blind Obedience can be due to none but God, and he himself seldom exacts it. If we will grant Governours and Subjects to be men, who have the use of their own Reason and Judgment, it is impossible to state the Case of Authority and Subjection otherwise than thus; That the Faith and Judgment of Governours, influences and directs their Government, and gives Laws of Faith and Manners to Subjects; and the private Judgments of Subjects direct them how far they are to believe and obey their Governours; and God himself Judges between them; and by his Providence prevents or over-rules all those Disorders which may happen either in Church or State in this World, and rewards or punishes both Governours and Subjects according to their deserts in the next. And this supersedes all farther Disputes about some hard Cases, or the sincerity or insincerity of Governours or Subjects; for every man must of necessity judge for himself; and God will govern and judge all; which there could be no pretence for, if we had not the free exercise of our Reason in the government of our selves.

The Paper.

But I know't is urged, The Church of England is guided by Antiquity for the Interpretation of Scripture; but every one knows that there is great difficulty in that too even for Scholars, at least I am told so; for no Church admits of all that is ancient, for several Heresies are so; and since we say, Number makes nothing for Truth, and thus all men may err, and that there is no certain mark by visible Succession to find out which are true Believers, in this Confusion the Church of England must be very fortunate, not to retain

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retain too much, as the Arians and Macedonians, &c. say we do, or too little, as the Romanists say.

Answer.

The Church of *England* indeed has regard to the Doctrine of the Primitive Church in expounding Scripture; not that she fetches all her Expositions from ancient Writers, but that she takes care not to expound Scripture in contradiction to the ancient Faith of the Church contained in the ancient Creeds; and it requires no great skill in Antiquity to know what this Faith is which we repeat every day in the Apostles Creed; and this is a good Argument that we expound Scripture right, when the Sense we give of it, is what the words and reason of the Text import, and agrees with the Faith of the first and purest Ages of the Church. Had we no ancient Records, we could find out the true Sense of Scripture in all necessary Points of Faith; but the Traditionary Doctrine of the Church, where the Tradition is plain and clear, and therefore easie to be known, is a great confirmation of those Interpretations we give of Scripture in conformity to the ancient Belief, and confutes all the Evasions and Criticisms of Hereticks. For when the words of Scripture may with some Art be expounded to different Senses, either to justify some new or ancient Heresies, or the Catholick Faith, we need not doubt but that is the true Sense, which agrees with the uniform Belief of the Primitive Church, who were the best Judges what the Faith of the Apostles was, by whom the Scriptures were written; and though there were indeed very ancient Heresies, yet nothing is plainer in Ecclesiastical History than the distinction between those ancient Heresies and the Catholick Faith, and therefore Scholars cannot easily mistake them; and as for those who are unlearned, that short and ancient Summary of the Catholick Faith, contained in the Apostles Creed, and expounded by the *Nicene* Fathers in their Creed, which is in every bodies hands, and part of our daily or weekly Service, is Security enough against all Fundamental Mistakes.

The Christians of the Church of *England* have a very plain
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and easie Resolution of their Faith. As for the positive Articles of Faith, we have the ancient Creeds, which have been received in all Ages of the Christian Church from the times of the Apostles; and which the most perverse Hereticks cannot deny to have been the Catholick Faith; and yet we do not believe these meerly upon the Authority of Tradition, but because we find all these Doctrines plainly taught in Scripture; and for this the meanest Christian need not depend wholly upon the Authority of his Guides, but has liberty to examine their Expositions, and the Reasons of them, which are so plain and convincing in the great and Fundamental Articles of our Faith, that an honest man, who meets with a skilful Guide, may satisfy himself about it, and see with his own Eyes.

Now what greater assurance can we have in this case, than the harmony and consent of Scripture and Tradition, which confirm and justify each other? The Apostles no doubt preached and writ the same things, and it is a good Argument, That is an uncorrupt Tradition, which agrees with the Doctrine of the Scripture, and that that is a true exposition of Scripture, which agrees with the ancient Formularies of Faith, delivered down to us by an unquestionable Tradition from the first Ages of the Church.

As for negative Articles, about which is our only controversy with the Church of *Rome*, since nothing can be an Article of Faith, but what Christ or his Apostles have taught, we think it sufficient to reject all such Doctrines, as are not plainly and expressly taught in Scripture, and this the meanest Christian with the help of a Guide may understand. For [as in Reason it must be, when men will prove that to be in the Scripture which is not] the Scripture Proofs which are urged by the most learned Doctors of the *Roman* Communion, for their peculiar Doctrines, which we reject, are so apparently unconvincing, that it requires very little skill to confute them. And though this were reason enough of it self to reject any Doctrine which arrogates the authority and necessity of an Article of Faith, that the Scripture does not teach it, yet in most cases we can shew, and that to the conviction of the meanest understanding, which is honest and unprejudiced,

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that such Doctrines are either in exprefs words, or by plain and necessary consequence, rejected and condemned in Scripture, which is somewhat more than not to be taught there; because it is certain no Church can have Authority to teach what the Scripture condemns.

And then as for Authority, we appeal to the best Authority of the Christian Church, the three first Ages after the Apostles, who are the most credible Witnesses (which is all the Authority they can have) of the Apostolick Doctrine and Practice, and can plainly prove from those venerable Records, that the Doctrines and Practices in dispute between us and the Church of *Rome*, were either never taught, or actually condemned by those Primitive Fathers. And though in other cases it is a hard thing to prove a Negative, it is not so here, because the proof lies all on the positive side. For those, who will teach such Doctrines and Practices ought to prove them, for without such a Proof they are to be rejected on course; and therefore if we can confute their Proofs, we need do no more; and this is a very easie Task, especially with reference to the first three Centuries; for since they themselves are now ashamed of the counterfeit *Dionysius*, their Decretal Epistles, and such like spurious Writings, the wisest of them pretend to very few Testimonies from the first Writers, and those which they do alledge are such lame ones, as need very little confutation.

These are the Protestant Grounds of Faith, as it is professed in the Church of *England*, and there is but one material Objection against the certainty of this way. That our Dissenters pretend to Scripture as well as we, and so most Hereticks have always done; and as for Antiquity, the Church of *Rome* makes a greater noise with it than we do, and how then can a plain and unlearned man chuse safely in such variety of Judgments and Opinions?

Now the force of this Argument consists in this, That because some men mistake, no man can be in the right; or because some men may confidently believe they are in the right, when they are in the wrong, therefore no man can be sure that he is in the right; which pretence would be laughed at in all other cases, excepting Religion, and here I am sure

it.

it deserves to be so. There is a vast difference between confidence of Perswasion, and certainty of Knowledge; the prejudices of Education, the Authority of Guides, the byas of Interest, and such like fallacious Principles may make men very confident, when they know little or nothing about the matter, or men may reason falsely, and think themselves very confident, as a man in a Dream does; but can no man be certain he is awake, because some men very confidently think themselves awake, when they are in a Dream? The greatest part of the World pronounce a hasty Judgment, before they are well awake, before they have considered the matter thoroughly, and weighed every circumstance of it; and a man who has but half considered a thing, may with very good reason think himself certain so far, and yet may be grossly mistaken, because there is another half which he has not considered. Every man is sensible of this when he corrects a Mistake, for he discovers something which he had not thought on before, which makes him alter his Judgment about it; and therefore though some men are confident and yet mistaken, it does not hence follow, that no man can be certain when he Reasons right; for Truth lies so easie in a mans mind, who has thoroughly considered things, and has such a native brightness and lustre in it, that he can no more doubt of it, than whether the Sun be up when he sees its light.

But let us consider this Objection particularly, with reference both to Scripture and Antiquity.

1. It is objected, That Hereticks pretended the Authority of Scripture, as well as the Orthodox, and our Dissenters as well as the Church of *England*. But what then? Is the Scripture of no use, because some men use it ill? Is it not possible to find out the true sense of Scripture, because some men put a false sense on it? Can these Hereticks be confuted out of the Scripture, or not? If not, why do we charge them with Heresie? If they may, how are such Heresies, being fathered on the Scriptures, an Argument against studying the Scriptures; and relying on their Authority? For we cannot confute Heresies by the Scripture, unless we can understand the Scriptures; and if we may find out the true sense of Scripture, notwithstanding that Hereticks put a wrong

sense on it, then we may be as certain, that we understand the Scriptures aright, as we are, that others do misunderstand them. But besides this: Though Hereticks pretend to expound Scripture, yet they contradict the Faith of the Primitive Church, and therefore their Case differs vastly from the Case of the Church of *England*, whose Faith is founded both on Scripture and Apostolick Tradition, as I observed before. And as for our Dissenters, our Dispute with them is not about Articles of Faith, but the external Modes and Circumstances of Worship, or the Government and Discipline of the Church; and the Question between us is, Whether we must use no external Circumstances of Worship, but what are prescribed in Scripture; or, Whether the constant Practice of the Church from the days of the Apostles be not the best Comment on Scripture as to the external Government of it? And this, I think, is so baffled a Cause, that the *Romanists* are hard put to it when they use that Argument.

Secondly, As for Antiquity, the Church of *Rome* makes great boasts of it, but they are very vain ones; and who can help mens pretending to Antiquity, when it is apparently against them? No man indeed can be a competent Judge of this, but those who are skilled in Antiquity, and have examined their pretences; but there are some considerations which lye obvious to every man, and may serve to direct the unlearned what Judgment to make in this matter.

1. For had true Antiquity been on their side, what need had they of spurious and counterfeir Authors to make some appearance of Antiquity with? This has been the great Artifice of the Church of *Rome*, though they begin now to be ashamed of it, since the learned Reformers have discovered the Cheat. Who pleases may see some account of this in an English Book, entituled *Roman Forgeries*; and this is reason enough to suspect their pretences to Antiquity; for no man takes Sanctuary in Falshood, who has Truth on his side.

2. Another Evidence of this is their corrupting Ancient Authors, and because they can find nothing in them to their purpose, to insert something which is; but the plainest and honestest confession of this matter is their *Index Expurgatorius*, which corrects the Fathers, and orders the leaving out of such Passages

Passages as make against them; now when they are forced to leave out and put into the Fathers, it is very suspicious that they are convinced, the Fathers are not on their side.

3. Where they make the loudest Cry of Antiquity, the Scripture is either against them, or says nothing for them; and though we allow the Ancient practice of the Church in matters of Discipline and Government, to be a good Pattern for us to follow in such particulars as are not expressed in Scripture, if they comply with the general Rules and Directions of Scripture; yet we do not think Antiquity itself to be a sufficient justification of any Doctrines of Faith, or new acts of Worship, which either the Scripture condemns, or does not teach; and this is a manifest difference between the Pre-
tences of the Church of *England*, and the Church of *Rome*, to Antiquity. The Church of *England* justifies her Doctrines and Practices, both from Scripture and Antiquity, which is as sure a foundation as we can possibly have; the Church of *Rome* alleges Antiquity (such as it is) to prove such Doctrines and Practices, as the Scripture either condemns, or knows nothing of. Now we think the Scriptures have the greatest Antiquity, and are a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners and that no other Antiquity can controul the Authority of the Scriptures. As for Instance: Suppose the Church of *Rome* could prove the Worship of Images, Praying to Saints and Angels, Prayers in an unknown Tongue, and Communion in One kind, &c. to have been anciently practised in the Church (though this they are never able to prove) yet what is this to the purpose, when the Scripture expressly condemns the VVorship of Images, and giving Religious VVorship to any other Being, but to God only, and by their own Confession says nothing of the VVorship of Saints; and that *St. Paul* disputes designedly against Prayers in an unknown Tongue; and that our Saviour instituted his Supper in both kinds, and commanded them to drink of the consecrated Cup, as well as to eat the Bread. Though I have a great Reverence for Antiquity, yet if *St. Paul* in his days pronounced an *Anathema* against Angels themselves, who should preach any other Gospel, we may safely renounce the Authority of any Church, that shall contradict the express Commands and Institutions of Christ.

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To conclude this Argument: Were Antiquity our only Guide and Rule in matters of Faith and Worship, I readily grant it would be a very uncertain Rule; and such as neither the Learned nor the Unlearned, could build their Faith on; for there have been great variety of Opinions and Practices in other Ages of the Church, especially since the fourth Century (from which the Church of *Rome* principally date their Antiquity) as well as in our own; which shews, what an uncertain Foundation the Church of *Rome* has for her Faith, as for all those Doctrines and Practices wherein she differs from us, which have no foundation in Scripture, and at best a very uncertain one in very late Antiquity: But this does not concern us, who prefer Scripture Antiquity before all other, and own no Antiquity in contradiction to the Scripture, which is the Rule and Foundation of our Faith; and by this we know, that we neither retain too much nor too little, because we teach neither more nor less than what the Scripture teaches.

The Paper.

But 'tis Replied, The Church of England gives leave even to Women to examine the Truth of what they teach; but certainly this is a Complement, they being incapable of Examination, neither indeed are Statesmen, Lawyers, the Busy, nor the stupidly Ignorant. For if we will be Judges our selves of these matters, what Life or Capacity is sufficient? for in Justice if I examine, I ought to hear all the several Pretenders to the Interpretation of Scripture, who make it their Rule of Faith, so to examine those Texts that make against us, as well as those for us, and the several Expositors. For in Affairs of much less importance People are thought foolish, and partial, let one party tell his story to a seeming demonstration, not to preserve another Ear for the other side, before he determines, if he must judge at all.

Answer.

The lightness of this Expression of Complementing, does not favour of a serious mind in matters of such vast importance. Did our Saviour then Complement his Hearers, when he

And to make com-

commanded them to search the Scriptures; for he had Women, and very busie People who heard his Sermons: The Poor and the Ignorant, and the despised People, Publicans and Sinners received the Gospel, which does not so much require great leisure and capacity for study, as an honest teachable Mind; and I confess, I think it a great reproach to the Gospel of our Saviour to make it so much an Art and a Mystery, that none but great Scholars can understand it. Scholars indeed have made an Art, and a meer disputing Art of it; and Hereticks, who have corrupted the Gospel, have endeavoured by perverse Comments to make plain places obscure; and the Church of *Rome* has more countenanced this Pre-
tence than any other Church in the World, to frighten People from Reading that Book, which is the most dangerous Book that ever was written against Popery. And after all their talk of the obscurity of Scripture, their denying the People the free use of it, is a plain confession, that they think it too plain against themselves, so plain that every ordinary Christian would be able to see it.

But if so very few People are able to judge of the Disputes in Religion, what course shall Women and other Persons, whom the Paper makes such incompetent Judges, take? Suppose they have been educated in the Communion of the Church of *England*, and are now assaulted by Popish Priests to go over to the Church of *Rome*, must they make this change with Reason, or without it? Must they judge for themselves, or forsake one Church and chuse another without Judgment? Or can Women, or Busie, or Ignorant People more easily find out the true Church and the infallible Judge, than they can read in Scripture; that they must worship none but God; that they must not worship Images and Pictures; that they must pray to God in a known Tongue, and celebrate the Supper of our Lord by drinking of the Cup, as well as by eating the Bread? Whoever ventures to forsake the Communion of a Church, wherein he was baptized and educated, I am sure ought to be able to judge, whether he be or no; and those who confess they are not able to judge, ought to be kept where they are; for it is safer to continue in a Church without Judgment, than to forsake it without Reason and Judgment.

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ment. In the first Case, The Providence of God in our Birth and Education will make some Apology for our involuntary Mistakes; but if we wantonly leave one Church and go to another, without being able to judge of either, the Act is wholly our own choice, and if we leave a better for a worse, we must take what follows; and therefore this is the most improper Argument in the World to be used by one, who is wavering between two Churches; for if he must not use his own private Judgment, I cannot guess how he should either chuse or refuse. Those who challenge a liberty of judging for themselves, which is the undoubted right of all Reasonable Creatures, may change as they see reason, and at their own peril if they chuse wrong; but those who disclaim all right and capacity of judging, must continue as they are, and take their chance, for they may as well chuse their Faith as their Guide, whom they will in all things believe.

But still the force of the Objection is not answered, That he who will judge, must judge upon the whole matter, and therefore must be able to know and answer whatever is said to the contrary; which the greatest number of Men, as well as Women, are not able to do; but if this be true, the greatest numbers of Men as well as Women must never believe there is a God, or that Christ came from God to declare his Will to the World; for there are very few of them that ever heard, or are able to answer the tenth part of the Arguments of Atheists and Infidels against the Being of a God, and the Christian Religion; and yet it is ridiculous to talk of Authority, or a Judge of Controversies in these matters; for we must first believe there is a God, and that Christ came from God, before we can believe that they have appointed a Judge of Controversies. So that we must either say, That Common People, who have not time nor abilities to understand and answer all the Objections which are made against the Existence of a God, can have no good reason to believe there is a God; or we must grant, that men may have sufficient reason to believe some things, without being able to answer all possible Objections which are made against them.

The plain account of this matter is this: That there is such a degree of Evidence, Arguments so plain and clear and
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convincing, that the Mind may safely acquiesce in them, without examining or answering all possible Objections which may be started. Every man finds this in himself, there are many things which he can never be made to doubt of, though it may be he has but one plain Argument to prove them: Though the Philosopher disputed very subtilly against the possibility of Motion, he could perswade none of his Scholars that Motion was impossible, because they saw themselves and every thing else move every day; which was a sufficient confutation of all the Arguments that can be brought against Motion. If I have any one unanswerable Argument to prove that a thing is, or that it is not, this is a sufficient foundation for my Faith, though I cannot answer all Objections against it: For there are no Objections of any force against a plain and positive Proof, but such as weaken the Proof it self, and they indeed must be considered, but all other collateral difficulties may be rejected; for if I can prove that a thing is, no other difficulties about the nature, notion, or operations of such a Being can prove that it is not. As for Instance: We have a great many positive Proofs that there is a God, especially from the visible effects of his Power, and Wisdom in making the World; now if this be a good Argument, and nothing can be said against it, which can move a considering man, then we may firmly believe there is a God, though there may be a great many difficulties objected against the Notion of a God, what he is, and how he made the World, &c. which do not prove that there is no God, but that we do not perfectly comprehend him. And yet this is generally the case, that where there is one plain and evident Proof for or against any thing, there is no plain and evident Proof on the other side; for then indeed we should be in a hard case, could there be plain positive Proofs, for both sides of the Question. It will be of use to shew this more particularly, how men of very ordinary Abilities may arrive to a very great certainty in Religion, without being able to dispute the Point; or to answer all possible Objections; and the best way to explain this to the meanest Understanding, is to give some particular Instances of it.

It is a great Dispute between us and the Church of Rome,

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Whether the Sacramental Bread and Wine be transubstantiated into the Natural Flesh and Blood of Christ, which I think a plain man, who will believe his Senses, may determine without disputing; for he has the best Evidence that he possibly can have for any thing, that the consecrated Bread and Wine is still Bread and Wine, not Flesh and Blood; for all his Senses tell him so; and he who will suffer himself to be reasoned out of his Senses, deserves to be deceived; and very absurdly complains of want of Evidence and Certainty, when he rejects the most certain Evidence that God can give him. In matters of Sense the testimony of our Senses is certainly the best Evidence, and every man who has his Eyes in his head, can see whether it be Bread and Wine or not; and therefore this alone is sufficient to create Certainty in defiance of all Objections to the contrary.

Thus the second Commandment, which forbids the worship of all Images without any restriction or qualification, is a plain and express proof against Image-worship; for whatever Apologies may be made for the worship of Images, here is an express Law against it; in such plain terms, as require great Art and Sophistry to evade them, but no Art to understand them; now there being a positive Law against the worship of Images, and no Law either in the Old or New Testament to give the least allowance to any kind of Image-worship, any man, who will believe according to Evidence must condemn Image-worship, whatever other unscriptural Arguments or Authorities may be alledged for it: And I know no need there is of any dispute in the case, if men will be determined by a Divine Law.

Thus if there be a Supreme infallible Head of the Church, he must be appointed by Christ, and that in such plain words, that every body may know who he is, and what his Authority is; but Christ has done no such thing, and therefore there is none; and this alone is Evidence enough to satisfy the meanest man in this matter without disputing. For if Christ hath appointed no Supreme Infallible Judge, I am sure all the Arguments in the world cannot make one: This is so plain and evident, that a man who will be convinc'd by Reason, cannot resist it; for though no pretence of usefulness or
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necessity can prove that there is such a Judge, yet that Christ has appointed no such Judge, evidently proves that there is none; for he cannot be unless he is evidently appointed by Christ; and yet he is not evidently appointed, unless it be in such plain words, as admit of no reasonable dispute. So that this whole Controversie about the Supream Head of the Church, and an infallible Judge, issues in this one Point, Whether Christ hath appointed such a Head and Judge? and there is but one way to prove it, *viz.* by shewing where and when Christ has done this; and this the meanest man without disputing may judge of; for if no such thing plainly appear, the want of Evidence for it is all the Evidence we need to have against it.

And thus it is in most of the disputes between us and the Church of *Rome*, especially where the People are most concerned, they are reduced to this one plain Question, Whether any such thing was instituted by Christ? because without such an Institution they can have no virtue in them; and whether they be instituted or not, the most unlearned man, who can read the Bible, at least with the help of a Guide, may satisfy himself. As for instance, Whether the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be a Propitiatory Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead? whether the Laity are not as much bound to drink of the Sacramental Cup as to eat of the Bread? whether it be lawful to pray to Saints departed, and to make them our Advocates and Intercessors with God? whether we must pray to God in a Language which we do, or do not understand, &c. I say nothing can justify these things, but an Institution; and when no such Institution appears, it is a vain thing to attempt any other way to prove the lawfulness or usefulness of them; especially, if besides the want of such a positive Institution, we have plain Evidence against them, and such as every man may understand. When the Scripture tells us, That Christ has by one Offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, *Hebr. 9. 25, 26. & 10. 14.* this is a direct proof against the Sacrifice of the Mass, wherein he is offered ten thousand times every day. When Christ is the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, and can be offered by none but himself, how comes he to be offered by a Mass Priest, unless he as well as the Bread

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and Wine, be transubstantiated into Christ? It is certain, there can be no such thing as the Popish Sacrifice of the Mass, unless the Bread and Wine be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ; and we are as certain as our Senses can make us, that there is no Transubstantiation.

As for the half-Communion, it is confessed that Christ did institute his last Supper in both kinds, and commanded them all to drink of the Cup: And this may satisfy any man, who does not believe that the Church of Rome has authority to repeal the Institutions of Christ, and to forbid what he commanded.

And when St. Paul assures us, That there is but one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, one would think this Evidence enough against the Mediation of Saints and Angels, when they cannot shew one word for it. For as for their distinction between Mediators of Redemption and pure Intercession, they cannot shew it in Scripture; where our Redeemer is our only Advocate: And when Christ himself enforces and ratifies that Command of the Law, *Tbou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*; this is a plain Argument against the Invocation of Saints, since they have nothing for it. And when there is no Authority in Scripture for praying in an unknown Tongue, one would think that the absurdity of the Practice, and the Authority of St. Paul, who expressly condemns it, were Evidence enough against it.

So that though men may be at the needless expence of a great deal of Learning in these Controversies, yet in truth there is no Learning required to understand them, the meanest man may judge for himself; for the Controversie turns upon so plain a Point, and there is so plain Evidence in the Case, that an honest man may have abundant evidence and satisfaction, though he do not understand one word of all the Learning which is lost in such Disputes.

The Paper.

In short, I think there is but Evidence or Authority to move us to believe.

Answer.

This is certainly true, if it be rightly understood; that is, if
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by Evidence is meant the Evidence of Sense and Reason, and by Authority, the Authority of Scripture, which is the Authority of God, who spake by *Moses* and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and by Christ and his Apostles in the New, and the Authority of the Primitive Church, as credible Witnesses of the Apostolick Doctrine and Practice; in this sense we grant that our Faith must be founded both upon Evidence and Authority, and this is the true Protestant Resolution of Faith; and then the only fault of this Proposition is, That Evidence and Authority are opposed to each other, whereas they must always go together in a true Rational Faith. But if by Evidence be meant all the Arguments whereby we can prove the truth of any thing, whether from Sense or Reason, or Scripture, or the Testimony of Antiquity, and by Authority be meant the Authority of a visible Judge of Controversies, as it is understood in this Paper, then at best this is a very precarious Proposition, without the least shadow of truth, that either Evidence or Authority must move us to believe; that is, that our Faith must be resolved either into Evidence, or the Authority of a visible Judge. For how is this proved, That when there wants Evidence for our Faith, we must believe upon the Authority of a visible Judge? It seems to me a more natural Consequence, That where there wants Evidence, we must not believe at all. If it had been first proved, that God had appointed a visible Judge to direct those who cannot judge for themselves, there had been some pretence for saying, that we must believe either upon Evidence, or upon the Authority of a Judge; but without proving this first, I would define any man to prove to me, that I am bound to believe what I have no Evidence for, or which is all one, no such Evidence, as I can understand; and if I be not bound to believe without Evidence, how can the want of Evidence prove that there must be a visible Judge, into whose Authority I must resolve my Faith?

The Paper.

Evidence to the generality of People is impossible.

But I have already proved that this is not impossible, but the meanest.

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meanest man, with the help of a learned and faithful Guide, may understand the Scriptures in all things necessary for a Christian to know. But suppose at present, that the generality of People cannot do this, yet can learned men do it? And one would think, if there be any Evidence, at least learned men may understand it; for that which is not evident, neither to the learned nor to the unlearned, I fear is no Evidence at all; unless there be such a kind of Evidence, as is evident to nobody; and yet the Church of Rome has brought things to a fine pass, if she must be forced to deny, that we have any Evidence for our Religion.

Now if there be any Evidence for our Religion, and learned men may understand it, then, at least learned men may judge for themselves, and not depend upon the Authority of any other Judge; and thus there is no need, nay there can be no use of a visible Judge for the learned part of the world; for to say that learned men have Evidence to ground their Faith on, and yet must not believe according to Evidence, but Authority, is to say, that men have eyes, but must not use them to see their own way, but must follow a Guide blindfold. And yet if learned men be allowed to see, and judge for themselves, a Judge of Controversies will signify very little; for it is learned men who start Difficulties and manage Disputes, and are the Authors and Patrons of Heresies; and if these learned men, who may and must judge for themselves, differ from each other, and from the Judge of Controversies, what remedy is there? Nay, if learned men must judge for themselves according to the Evidence they have of things, and not be over-ruled by Authority without Evidence, there can be no visible Judge of Controversies; for an Authority, which may be contradicted (as it may be, if learned men must judge for themselves) can be no Authority either with the learned or unlearned; for the unlearned will have no great Reverence for that Authority which the learned may contradict. And therefore whoever will have a Judge of Controversies, must not lay the necessity of having such a Judge merely upon the ignorance of the Multitude, for this does not prove that learned men must have such a Judge; nay, it proves that learned men need no such Judge, if Ignorance only make him

necessary; and if there be not a Judge for learned men, there can be no Judge of Controversies; for there are more Disputes among the learned than the ignorant. The ignorance of the People is only made a pretence to deceive ignorant People, but is no good Reason for a visible Judge; for there can be no visible Judge, unless he judge for the learned, as well as the unlearned; and if learned men must not judge for themselves, it is then a ridiculous thing to talk of any other Evidence than the Authority of the Judge; for what does Evidence signify if no man must use it? Nay, upon these Principles it is a ridiculous thing to distinguish between learned and unlearned men in Matters of Religion. To what purpose is it to read and study the Scriptures, Fathers, and Councils, when they must not exercise their own Reason or Judgment about them? What privilege have the learned above the unlearned, when they must know, and believe no more than their Judge will let them?

The Paper.

And we are discouraged from the quiet way of Submission to the Clergies Authority, by your telling us, That no Assembly of Men have power on Earth to bind the Conscience.

Answer.

How comes Submission to the Clergies Authority in here? For is every Priest the Judge into whose Authority we must resolve our Faith? This indeed is the last Resolution of Faith in the Church of Rome, for the Priest is the immediate Guide of every mans Faith and Conscience; and after all the talk of a visible Judge, the People know nothing more what he reaches, than what their Priest tells them; who it may be himself knows little of the matter. And I cannot see what greater security this gives the People of the Roman Communion, than what our People have, who have generally as wise and learned and honest Guides as they, to say nothing more.

But who ever said, That no Assembly of men have power on Earth to bind the Conscience? We do acknowledge that the Church

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Church has power to make Laws to bind the Conscience; for whatever Laws she makes for the edification and good government of Christian People, which contradict no Law of God, and are agreeable to the general Rules of the Gospel, do bind the Conscience. Nay, in Matters of Faith, the Authority of the Church is so sacred, that all Christians are bound in Conscience quietly to submit to her Decisions, where there is not plain Evidence against them: But we say indeed, That no Man, nor Assembly of Men, have such Authority as to oblige us to believe all their Dictates and Decrees without examination, much less contrary to the evidence of Sense, Reason, and Scripture, and the Judgment and Practice of the first Ages of the Church, and therefore we do not require that men should believe merely upon the Authority of their Teachers, without understanding why they do so. But this I hope is no discouragement to any men to submit to the Instructions of their Guides, and to learn from them what they are to believe, and why; and this will make them wiser men, and more understanding Christians, than to rely wholly on their Authority.

The Paper.

For Authority, that of the Church of Rome is infinitely greater, who, it is to be feared, at least has an appearance of Succession and Visibility, and who pretends, that God has left in that Church such means, so happy and so easie to attain to the certainty of the Truth, that our very Divines wish, in this confusion of things, God had so ordered it for certainty and union.

Answer.

This is a strange Paragraph, that only a fear of an appearance of Succession and Visibility, and her own pretence that God has made her the visible Judge of Controversies, should render the Authority of the Church of Rome infinitely greater than of any other Church, which are very little things to give so great an Authority.

But we will readily grant, that the Church of Rome has been

been a visible Church in a constant Succession of Bishops and Pastors, from the Apostles days till now; What then? how does this give her a greater Authority than other Churches, which have as visible a Succession as she? The Greek Church has been a visible Church, and preserved her Succession from the Apostles till now; the Church of England is as visible, and has as good a Succession as the Church of Rome; how then does Succession and Visibilty give the Church of Rome a greater Authority than the Greek Church, or the Church of England?

It is a mighty weak Foundation for the Authority of a Judge of Controversies (which is the matter in question) that such a Church has a visible Succession from the Apostles. A Judge of Controversies, who shall oblige all men to believe his determinations, must be infallible; unless we will say, that God has obliged us, without examination, to believe a Judge who may err, which cannot be, unless we can suppose that God may oblige us to believe a lye, for thus it may happen, if we are always obliged to believe a Judge, who may sometimes err, as all fallible Creatures may: Which shews, what a poor shift it is which some late Writers have used, (and which this Paper, which speaks not one word of Infallibility, seems to imitate) to set aside the Dispute about the Infallibility of the Church, which they can make nothing of, and to insist only on the Authority of the Church to determine Controversies, as a visible Judge; for that only obliges men either to renounce the Communion of such a Church, or to submit to her Determinations, not at all adventures to believe as the Church believes, as I shewed before; and therefore this does not concern the Dispute about the Resolution of Faith.

Now if the Judge of Controversies must be infallible, how does a visible Succession from the Apostles prove any Church to be infallible? This is no natural effect, as the Romanists themselves grant; for then the Successors in all the Apostolical Chairs must be infallible, since all the Apostles were as infallible as St. Peter; whereas they will allow this only to the Chair of St. Peter, as a peculiar Privilege granted to him by Christ, so that it is not Succession or Visibilty which proves the Church of Rome to be the infallible Judge of Con-

controversies, which is the thing this Paper insists on, but they must return to the good old Arguments of *Tu es Petrus; & pasce Oves*, which I perceive the Author of this Paper was ashamed of; and therefore I shall not take a needless trouble to confute them.

If indeed they could prove a visible Succession of Doctrine and Worship, as well as Bishops, from the Apostles, that they believed and practised neither more nor less through all the several Ages of the Church to this day, than what St. Peter taught them, though this would not make them the Judge of Controversies, yet they would be good Witnesses of the Apostolical Faith, and there would be great reason to enquire, what their Faith and Worship is: But their meer Succession to the Apostles does not prove that they have neither diminished nor added to the Faith of the Apostles; for there is no natural necessity that those who succeed should always be of the mind of their Predecessors; and we have plain Evidence, that the Church of *Rome* has in several Ages made new and strange additions to the Christian Faith, and their Succession of Bishops without a Succession of Faith and Worship, is little worth.

And yet it is much stranger still, that the Church of *Rome* pretence to the Authority of a Judge, should be made a Reason to believe that she has this Authority. What advantage has Confidence above Modesty over weak Minds! The Church of *England* might pretend this with as much reason as the Church of *Rome*; but she disowning Infallibility loses all claim to it, and the Church of *Rome* pretending to Infallibility, it seems, gains a right to it by Possession and Usurpation.

But the Argument, such as it is, seems to be this, That the Divines of the Church of *England* wish in this confusion of things, that there were a Judge of Controversies, and therefore by their own Confession, a Judge is very useful and necessary, and therefore there is such a Judge, and no other Church pretending to that Authority, but the Church of *Rome*, therefore she alone is that Judge: Which is such a Chain of Consequences, as hang together by Magick, for they have no natural connexion. If we did think a Judge

of Controversies useful, does it hence follow that God has appointed such a Judge, when there is no appearance of any such thing? Or if God had appointed such a Judge, does the Church of Rome, pretending to be that Judge, when she can shew no Commission for it, prove that she is so?

But the truth is, whatever Divines they be (if there be any such) who wish for such a Judge to unite the whole Christian Church in Faith and Worship, take very wrong Measures of things. And because the true understanding of this is the most effectual way to end this Controversie, I shall discourse particularly of it.

1. First then I observe, That an infallible Judge of Controversies, whom we are bound in all cases to believe, is inconsistent with the constitution of human Nature. Man is a Reasonable Creature, and it is natural to a Reasonable Creature to understand and judge for himself, and therefore to submit to any mans Judgment, how infallible soever he be, presumed to be, without understanding and judging for our selves, is an unnatural imposition upon Mankind; this destroys human Nature, and transforms a Man, who is a knowing and intelligent Creature, into a senseless, though infallible Machin, which moves by external direction, not from an inward Principle of Knowledge and Life. To know, and to follow a Guide without any Knowledge or Judgment of our own, are two very different things, the first is the Understanding of a man, the other a sort of Knowledge without Understanding. For though I had an entire System of true Propositions, which I must exercise no act of Reason and Judgment about, but only receive them as the Dictates of an infallible Judge; this is not human Knowledge; this is no perfection of human Understanding; no man is a jot the wiser or more knowing for all this, no more than he would be who could repeat all the Propositions in *Euclid*, and believe them to be all true upon the Authority of his Master, but knows not how to demonstrate any one of them, which is to understand nothing about them. Now I can never believe, that God will destroy human Nature, by suspending all the acts of Reason and Judgment, to make

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men infallible; which is a certain way indeed to prevent Error, to let men know and judge of nothing that they may not mistake; but for my part I value knowledge so much, that I had rather venture some Mistakes, than forfeit my Understanding. If my Faith must be resolved wholly into the Authority of an infallible Judge, though I may think I understand some things, yet I must not believe for that Reason, for then I must believe nothing but what I do understand, and see a Reason for, which makes every man his own Judge; but I must believe my Judge with, or without Understanding, without the exercise of my own Reason and Judgment, which may make us good Catholics, but does also unman us.

But you'll say, *Are we not bound to believe infallible Teachers, whom we know to be infallible? And has not God in several Ages given such Teachers to the World, Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles? And must we not resign up our Understandings to them? and does this unman us? Why then may we not resign up our Understandings to an infallible Judge now, as we ought to have done had we lived in the days of Christ and his Apostles, and any other infallible Teachers?* Now for Answer to this consider,

Secondly, That no infallible Teacher can wholly supersede the exercise of our own Reason and Judgment. For though the immediate Authority of God must and ought in all cases to over-rule us, and is the best and most rational account of our Faith, for nothing is more reasonable than to believe God, who is Eternal Truth; yet when any man pretends to teach by Gods Authority, we must in the first place judge of his Authority, and not believe every one, who pretends to come from God, which resolves the very Reason of our Faith into our own private Judgment, and therefore by this Rule we must at least use our own Judgment in the choice of our Judge, which in our present case will infer the use of our own Reason and Judgment as to all the material Disputes in Religion, and make such a Judge needless, when we have found him: Of which more presently.

Nay, Secondly, We must judge of the Doctrine of such a Teacher by Sense and Reason, which are the natural Principles.

cles of Knowledge; for let a man pretend never so much to a Divine Authority, if he preach any thing contrary to the Sense and Reason of Mankind, we are not to believe him, no not though he should work Miracles. For we must believe nothing comes from God which is contrary to Sense and Reason, which are the natural Notices God has given us of things; and as God cannot contradict himself, so we can never be surer that any man speaks from God, than we are of what Sense and Reason teaches; and if the Church of *Rome* would but suffer us to judge thus far, we should have an infallible demonstration against her Infallibility. However this shews, That the most infallible Teacher cannot destroy our natural liberty of judging, for we must judge of his Doctrine by Sense and Reason, and see that it contradict neither, which are the only natural Principles of Knowledge we have; which is therefore to exercise all the Reason and Judgment which God has given us.

And, Thirdly, Though we must receive all Divine and Supernatural Truths upon the Authority of the Revealer, yet we must own our own Reason and Judgment to understand the Revelation; which cannot possibly be otherwise. For whoever it be that speaks to us, whether God by an immediate Voice from Heaven, or a Prophet inspired by God, we have no way to understand what is said, but by our own natural Faculties, and therefore must judge of the Sense of what is said, just as we do at other times when any man speaks to us. And if we were not present to hear the Prophet speak, but have his Revelations delivered to us in writing, we must take the same course to understand such a Divine Book, as we do any other human Writing; if there be any difficulty in it, we must seek for some body to help us to understand it, but still we must understand for our selves, for no body else can understand for us, and if we must understand, we must judge for our selves too. This is all that we demand or desire, a liberty to understand and judge what God would have us believe and do; and this the most infallible Teacher cannot deprive us of no more than he can oblige us to see and hear with other mens Eyes and Ears, when God has given us Eyes and Ears of our own.

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And Fourthly, Where there is a standing Revelation, we must then judge of the Doctrine of all succeeding Prophets, how infallible soever they be, by its conformity to the preceding Revelation. We must never suppose, that God can contradict himself, and therefore though he may improve a former Revelation by new and more perfect discoveries, yet he can never contradict it; and hence it follows, That no true Prophet can contradict a true Revelation; but though a power of Miracles may give Authority to a new Prophet to expound a former Revelation, and to improve it, yet we must be well satisfied, that the Doctrine of this new Prophet be agreeable to the old Revelation; which makes us Judges of the Sense both of the old and the new Revelation: For it is impossible we can understand their agreement, unless we can judge of the Sense of both.

This was the Case of Christ and his Apostles, when they appeared in the World. The Law of *Moses*, and the Writings of the Prophets were the standing Revelation, which God had given to the Jewish Nation, whereby they were to try all Prophets. To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them, *Isaiah* 8. 20. and therefore though Christ wrought more and greater Miracles than ever *Moses* did, this alone had not been a sufficient Reason to believe him, had not his Person answered the Types and Predictions of the Law, and his Doctrine been not the destruction, but the improvement and perfection of the *Mosaical* Dispensation. To this trial he submitted himself and his Doctrine, appeals to *Moses* and the Prophets, requires them to search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me, *John* 5. 39. and after his Resurrection from the Dead, which one would have thought had been sufficient of it self to have confirmed his Divine Authority, yet he proves from Scripture, that *thus Christ ought to suffer, and to enter into his Glory, and beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them* (the two Disciples going to *Emaus*) the things concerning himself, *Luke* 24. 26, 27. And this course the Apostles took in their Sermons. *St Peter* did not only testify to the *Jews* as an Eye-witness, that *Christ was risen from the dead*, but proves, that *David* himself had

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propheſied of this, *Acts* 2. 22, &c. Thus *St. Paul* diſputed with the *Jews* at *Rome*, to whom he expounded and reſiſted the Kingdom of God, perſuading them concerning *Jeſus*, both out of the Law of *Moses*, and out of the Prophets from morning till evening, *Acts* 28. 23. Thus his Epistle to the *Romans* is one entire Diſpute about the obligation of the Law, and Juſtification by Faith in Chriſt, from the Types and Prediſtions of the Law it ſelf. So that Chriſt and his Apoſtles were certainly as infallible Teachers, as ever were in the VVorld, yet they did not bear men down meerly by their infallible Authority, but appealed to the Scriptures, and to every mans own Judgment of them, and God had ordered it ſo, that it could not be otherwiſe; for he had given them a ſtanding Revelation, whereby they were to judge of all new Prophets, whatever they were; but if they muſt have relied on the bare word of ſuch Prophets, whom they were to try by this Revelation, for the Senſe and Interpretation of it, this had been the ſame thing as to take their own word without any trial.

Now if Chriſt himſelf never pretended to any ſuch Authority, that all men ſhould believe him upon his own word, without examining his Doctrine by the Scripture, or exerciſing their own Reaſon and Judgment, can we think, that he ſhould give any ſuch Authority to *St. Peter*? Nay, when it is evident, that *St. Peter* never had any ſuch Authority, and never could exerciſe it, how can *St. Peters* Succeſſors have that in his right, which he never had nor could have himſelf? For though he was an infallible Teacher, yet every man had a liberty to examine what he taught, and to judge of it by its conformity to the Law and the Prophets.

But you'll ſay, Could not Chriſt appoint an infallible Judge of Controversies in his Church to decide all Diſputes, and to prevent Heresies and Schiſms? That Chriſt has not done this, I ſhall take for granted; till I ſee ſome better Proofs of it than I have yet met with; and I have ſome reaſon to think ſuch a Judge could not be appointed, whom we ſhould be obliged to rely on with an implicit Faith without examination, or any uſe of our own Reaſon and Judgment; and that is, becauſe it was impracticable to appoint a Judge, upon whole bare Authority we are bound to believe the truth of Chriſtianity

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it self; Christ and his Apostles did not assume to themselves to be such Judges in their days, for there lay an Appeal from them to *Moses* and the Prophets, as you have already heard, and so there does to this day; and if I must not take any mans word for the truth of the Christian Religion, I must not take his word neither for the truth of any Doctrine in Christianity. If I may to this day examine the Gospel by the Law and the Prophets, as the *Jews* did in our Saviours days, then I must judge for my self too as they did, and not believe any pretence of Infallibility against my own Sense and Reason. I cannot compare the Doctrine of the Law and the Gospel, unless I understand them both, and I can understand and judge only with my own Understanding; and if I must have done thus, though I had lived in our Saviours days, surely I must do so now, whatever infallible Teachers there may be in the World; which I think is a demonstration, that there neither is nor can be any such infallible Judge, whom I am bound to believe purely upon his own Authority.

But it may be Objected, That this proves too much, and undermines even the Protestant Resolution of Faith into the Authority of Christ and his Apostles, and the Writings of the New Testament as an infallible Rule of Christian Faith and Manners. For it seems, though we pretend to own their Infallibility, yet we must examine their Doctrine by the Law and not believe them to be infallible, till we have set in Judgment on their Doctrine, and approved it as agreeable to a more infallible Rule; and thus we believe their Infallibility, because we like their Doctrine; not believe their Doctrine, because they are infallible.

Now there is so much Truth in this Objection, that I cannot believe that Christ and his Apostles are Teachers come from God, unless I be satisfied that they teach nothing contrary to any former Revelation, which God has made of his Will; for God cannot contradict himself, and therefore whoever contradicts what God has before taught, can be no true Prophet. And therefore though Miracles alone were sufficient to give Authority to *Moses*, who was the first Prophet, by whom God made a publick Revelation of his Will, yet Miracles

cles alone were not sufficient to give Authority to any succeeding Prophets, but their Doctrine also must be examined by its conformity to the Law; for though Miracles gave them Authority to make new Revelations, yet not to contradict the old. So that to examine the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles by the Law, so far as to see that they do not contradict it, is no more than to examine, whether they be true Prophets or not, as all men ought to do before they believe any pretenders to Prophecy; but when it appears that they do not contradict the Law, then that power of working Miracles, wherewith they are endowed, obliges us to believe the in every thing else upon their own Authority. And thus we own Christ and his Apostles to be infallible Teachers, (and consequently receive the Writings of the New Testament as an infallible Rule of Christian Faith) because they were men endowed with supernatural Powers, and did not in their Preaching contradict any former Revelation of Gods Will. And this is all that we do, or need affirm, to destroy the Pretences of an infallible Judge; for if I must still judge for my self, whether the Doctrine of the Gospel do not contradict the Law, then I must judge for my self, both of the Sense of the Law and the Gospel, or else I cannot judge, whether they agree or disagree; and therefore there can be no infallible Judge, to whom I must submit my own Reason and Judgment in this Inquiry, for that were to own their Infallibility, before I know whether they are infallible or not.

Though I must believe whatever an infallible Judge teaches, yet I must not believe him till I know him to be infallible; and I should think no pretender to Infallibility should exempt himself from such a trial, as all Prophets after Moses, even Christ and his Apostles themselves submitted to; that is, to have their Doctrine tried by a standing Revelation. Now suppose the Pope, or Church of Rome to set up for this infallible Judicature; before I can own their Infallibility, I must at least examine, whether what they teach do not contradict the Law and the Prophets; for thus I may, and must examine the Gospel, it self, and if in any one thing they plainly and directly contradict the Law, I have nothing more to do with their Infallibility; for no man can be infallible, who mistakes in any one thing.

The Church of Rome then teaches, That we may give Religious Worship to Saints and Angels, and Images. Having the Law of Moses in my hand, I turn to it, and according to the best of my Understanding I find this Worship expressly forbid in the first and second Commandments. No, say they, this is your mistake; we are the infallible Judges; and you must not trust your own understanding, but take the sense of the Church in it. By your favour Gentleman, say I, you are a little too hasty with your Infallibility; when I am satisfied you are infallible, I will trust you, but I am now inquiring whether you are infallible or not, and therefore as yet we are upon even ground, and I must trust my own Judgment till I find one more infallible. Now, I say, you contradict the first and second Commandments, and therefore are not infallible, and you would prove, that you do not contradict these Commandments from your pretended Infallibility, which is the thing yet in question. Christ and his Apostles permitted men to judge for themselves, whether they contradicted the Law and the Prophets, and therefore suffered them to judge of the Sense of the Law too; and so must you do also, unless you pretend an exemption from all Trial and Examination, which Christ and his Apostles never pretended to. This shews, that even to this day no pretence of Infallibility can exempt men from having their Doctrine tried by the Law and the Prophets; for the Gospel it self may still be thus tried, and therefore there can be no such infallible Judge as has any Authority to oblige us to believe any Sense they put upon the Law contrary to our own Sense and Reason; for then such a Judge as this could not be tried by the Law: For if he alone has Authority to interpret the Law, no body can try him but himself. And this plain Instance I have given of their contradicting the first and second Commandments, utterly overthrows their Infallibility, till they can prove, not by their pretended Infallibility, but by plain Reason and Argument, that they do not contradict them. And we desire no more than to set aside their Plea of Infallibility, and we will reason the Case with them when they please.

And besides this, by a parity of Reason this Argument reaches

reaches much farther : For if the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles must be tried by the Law and the Prophets, because no man can have any Authority against a standing Revelation; then by the same Reason, whoever should now set up for an infallible Guide; his Doctrines must be examined by the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, which is now an infallible Rule to us. And if the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles might be examined by the Law and the Prophets, for the very same Reason the Doctrine of all succeeding Bishops must be tried by the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles; for they are as much a standing Revelation to the Christian Church, as the Law and the Prophets were to the *Jews*. Nay indeed, there is more reason now to examine the Doctrine of all Teachers by the Writings of the New Testament, than there was under the *Jewish* Dispensation to examine them by the Old; because this New Testament is the last and most perfect Revelation of God's Will, and we must expect and receive no more; for *S. Paul* pronounces an *Anathema* against *Angels* themselves, should they preach any other Gospel, *Gal. 1. 8, 9.* whereas the Law it self gave expectations of a more excellent Prophet than *Moses*, and of a more perfect Revelation; and therefore as they were to receive no Prophet who contradicted the Law of *Moses*, so we must receive none who preach any thing else, than what Christ and his Apostles have taught. Now if the New Testament be all that, and more than that to us, which the Old Testament was to the *Jews*, then we must have the same liberty of judging under the New Testament, which the *Jews* had under the Old : For there can be no more danger in our judging of the Sense of the Gospel, and examining the Doctrines of all men by it, than there was in allowing this liberty to the *Jews*, we have the same natural right to it which the *Jews* had; a Right, not owing to a positive Institution, but to the reason and necessity of the thing.

But to set aside this Dispute about the possibility of such an infallible Judge of Controversies, this very Consideration proves, that Christ never intended it; viz. That he has given us the Gospel in Writing as a standing Rule of Faith and Manners; and has appointed an Order of Men to study the

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Scripture themselves, and to instruct others in the true Sense and Interpretation of it.

1. Because he has given us the Gospel in Writing, which is now to us a standing Rule of Faith and Worship, as the Law and the Prophets was to the Jews. Now the use of a written Law is for every body to understand it, and direct their Faith and Manners by it. This was the use the Jews were required to make of the Old Testament, and certainly the new Testament was writ for the same end, or else I know not why it was writ: If then we must learn from the Scriptures what we are to believe and practise, this inevitably proves that our Saviours intention was, that we should judge for our selves; for no man can learn any thing from a Writing, unless he be allowed to understand it, and judge of the sense and meaning of it. Now is not this a plain Proof, that Christ never intended such a Judge of Controversies, whom we must believe with an implicate Faith? If I must receive my Faith upon the Authority of a Judge, then there is no need of a Rule which I must, and can make no use of; if I must follow my Rule, there is no room left for a Judge, for I must judge for my self: To resolve my Faith into the Authority of a Rule and of a Judge, are as inconsistent as judging and not judging, and therefore Christ could not appoint both ways, because they contradict each other; one requires the exercise of my own Reason and Judgment, and the other forbids it; and therefore since Christ has given us a written Rule, we may reasonably conclude he has appointed no Judge. For though a Law, and a Judge to execute that Law, are very consistent in Civil Government, where the Sentence of a Judge does not oblige mens Faith, but only authoritatively determine a difference, yet they are two very contrary, and therefore inconsistent Resolutions of Faith.

Secondly, As Christ has given us a Rule, so he has appointed an Order of men to study this Rule themselves, and to instruct other Christians in the meaning of it, which is an Argument he intended we should understand it. For why should we be taught the Scripture, but that we may understand it; and to what end should we understand it, but to make

make it our Rule? To teach and instruct, and to determine as a Judge, are two very different things; the first reserves to us a liberty of judging; the second determines us to believe the Dictates of our Judge. Now what need of both these? If Christ hath appointed a Judge, whom we must in all things believe, what need of Teachers to instruct men in the Knowledge of the Scriptures? If the Scriptures have no sense, but what the Judge gives them, what an impertinent trouble is it to study the Scriptures? Who can interpret them, but this infallible Judge? And how then can there be so many Teachers, if there be but one Judge? Or, if the Scriptures may be understood, and may be taught, what use is there of a Judge, unless it be to unteach what he has not a mind to? and then he may make all other Teachers useless when he pleases. Nay, if the greatest Apostles were no more than Teachers, where is the Judge? and yet this is the only Commission Christ gave to all the Apostles, and to Peter among the rest, to teach those things which he had commanded them. The Charge Christ gives to Peter is, *to feed his Sheep, and his Lambs*, which is the same St. Paul lays on the Elders of Ephesus, *Take heed unto your selves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers; to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood, Acts 20.28.* that is, to instruct and teach them; which is the reason St. Paul assigns for those different Orders of Men in the Church. *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Ephes. 4.11, 12, 13.* Here is no Judge of Controversies mentioned among all these, though he had been worth them all, and indeed had made all the other useless, if there had been any such Office. But that which I observe is, That the work of an Apostle was to instruct men in the Faith, to teach them Knowledge and Understanding, what they are to believe, and why; which is very inconsistent with the Office of a Judge. For he who instructs men, helps them to understand, and judge

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for themselves; but a Judge only imposes upon the Faith and Understanding of men without any liberty of judging. If we must not understand our Religion, nor use our Understanding in judging between Truth and Error, there can be no use for Teachers, and therefore that Christ has appointed men to instruct his Church, is a proof that he intended they should believe with their Understandings; and if all the Apostles, even St. Peter himself had no other Commission but to Teach, then their Authority could not extend farther than their Teaching; that is, they could not oblige men to believe more than they could make them understand, the reason of.

Well, but if Christ hath not appointed a Judge of Controversies, what Certainty can we have of our Religion? and what care has Christ taken of the Unity of the Church? These are two Points which must be considered, and if we can give a fair account of them without a Judge of Controversies, there will be so little need of such a Judge, that there will be no great Reason to contend about him.

First, As for Certainty; why cannot we be certain of our Religion, as well as of other Matters, without an infallible Judge? Does any man want an infallible Judge to make him certain of the sense of a plain Law, or any other intelligible Writing? to understand the difference between true and false reasoning? to know what kind of Evidence he may rely on as to Matters of Fact, which were done in a remote Country, or before he was born? Now, if we can be certain of any thing without an infallible Judge, then Certainty does not depend upon Infallibility, because we can be certain without it: Certainty of Knowledge depends upon the Certainty of Evidence. What we have certain Evidence for, we may be certain of; and what we have not certain Evidence for, we can never be certain of. To depend upon Authority, though it be supposed infallible, is but one sort of Evidence, and one kind of Certainty, *viz.* the certainty of Authority; and therefore if there be other kinds of evidence and certainty for our Religion, besides the Authority of an infallible Judge, then we may be certain still, though there were no infallible Judge: For where there
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are more means of Certainty than one, the taking away one does not destroy all Certainty; now I would fain see that man, who will venture to say, That we have no possible way to be certain of the truth of Christianity, or what Christ and his Apostles taught, but only the Testimony of an infallible Judge; for then there is no way left to make men Christians, unless they will own an infallible Judge, before they believe Christianity, which will argue great good Nature in them.

Well! but suppose there were other possible ways to attain a Certainty in Religion, yet there is none so easie, none so certain as an infallible Judge; which delivers us from tedious Inquiries, and doubtful Disputes, and makes all men Orthodox whether they will or no: Now for this very Reason I reject an infallible Judge, because it is very plain Christ never intended such a degree of Evidence as this. Faith is a Christian Grace and Vertue, and therefore must be an act of the Will, as well as of the Understanding, which supposes that the Evidence is not irresistible; for it is no Vertue to believe that the Sun shines when we see it. Such Evidence as forces an assent, is inconsistent with the nature of Faith, considered as a Vertue, which is a free and voluntary assent, upon such Evidence as is sufficient to satisfy an honest man, but not to compel an obstinate Infidel or Heretick to believe. Of this nature is that Evidence we have for the truth of Christianity. Miracles alone, as I observed before, did not prove Jesus to be the Messias or Christ, for then all men, who saw his Miracles, must have believed him, as they did *Moses*; but besides this, they were to inquire whether his Person answered the Characters the Prophets had given of the Messias, and whether his Doctrine were reconcileable with their Law; and here the Passions and Prejudices, and Lusts and Interests of men might interpose, and corrupt and byass their Judgment, and whether they would believe, or would not believe, did very much depend upon the temper and disposition of their minds. Hence our Saviour attributes the Infidelity of the Scribes and Pharisees to their Pride and Coverousness, and such like evil Causes, and requires an honest and teachable mind to prepare

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prepare and dispose men to receive the Gospel. Such he calls his Sheep; *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my Sheep, as I said unto you, My Sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,* John 10.26,27. Now if this be all the Evidence he has afforded the World of his own being the Messiah, which is the very Foundation of the Christian Religion, the Superstructure cannot be more firm and certain than the Foundation is, and therefore the same kind of Evidence which Christ thought sufficient to prove himself to be the Messiah, must be sufficient also for all the ends of Religion. Christ has no Disciples but sincere honest men, and therefore has given us such a degree of Evidence and Certainty, as may be a trial of our honesty. It is of no concernment, whether bad men be Infidels or Hereticks; and then if there be sufficient Evidence and Certainty to satisfy honest men, it is enough, and there is abundant Evidence for this purpose without an infallible Judge, and therefore there can be no need of him.

And besides this, our Saviour has promised the assistance of his Spirit, not only to work Faith in all well disposed Minds, but to enlighten their Understandings, and to guide them in the diligent use of those Means he has prescribed to find out Truth; which though it does not make them absolutely infallible, which there is no need of to carry men to Heaven, yet it preserves them from all great and fatal Mistakes. Now I would desire any man to tell me, what need there had been of the internal Illuminations of the Spirit to direct us in our inquiries after Truth, if Christ had provided such an external infallible Means as a Judge of Controversies.

And though honest men are not infallible, yet they have this security as to their speculative Mistakes, which have no ill influence upon their Lives; that the Mercies of God do as well extend to the infirmities of our Understanding as of our Wills. For if an involuntary Ignorance will be some Excuse even to bad men, to lessen their punishment, much more may we presume it will excuse good Men.

To demand such a degree of Evidence and Certainty, as God has not thought fit to give us, does great mischief to
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Religion; for this makes some men Atheists, and others Infidels. The Infidel thinks, that seeing there is not Evidence enough for the Christian Religion to force an Assent, therefore they are not bound to believe it; the Church of *Rome* owns this, That there is not sufficient Certainty without an infallible Judge; and hence they argue, That there must be an infallible Judge, and that the Pope, or Church of *Rome*, is that Judge. Now let the Infidel and the *Romanist* dispute it out, which of these two is the best consequence; that since we cannot be certain of our Religion, whether we should wholly reject it, or set up a Judge of Controversies; and in my Opinion the Infidel seems to have the better of it; for it is a natural and immediate consequence not to believe what we are not certain of, but I can see no connexion in the World between the want of Certainty, and the necessity of an infallible Judge; something to be sure must come between to unite them together, and the least we can think of is this; That it is necessary we should be certain in matters of Religion, and that there is no way to make us certain, but an infallible Judge; and therefore, since there is no certainty in Religion without such a Judge, we must grant that there is one. But now if this be granted, that there wants Evidence to make Christianity certain, how do they prove, that it is necessary we should be certain of it? Which signifies, that it is necessary we should be certain of that, which is not certain; and methinks it wants a little proof too, that a Judge of Controversies is the only possible way to make men certain. I would advise all Papists not to press this Argument of the uncertainty of Religion too far, lest when they come to consider it thoroughly, it make them Infidels.

But if men will be but reasonable, what greater certainty can they desire than we have; The Revelation of the Will of God, contained in a plain and intelligible Writing, which all honest and diligent Inquirers, at least with the help of a Guide, may understand in all things necessary to Salvation; the promise of the Divine Spirit to enlighten our Minds to understand the Scriptures, and to persuade us of the reason and certainty of our Faith, and the Mercies of God to pardon involuntary Mistakes.

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Secondly, The next Pretence for an Infallible Judge is *Unity*. For we see by sad Experience, that while every man judges for himself, the Christian Church is divided into Sects and Parties, who first differ in their judgment of things, and then separate from each others Communion; and thus it necessarily must and will be, till all submit to one Sovereign Authority, and unite in one Visible Head. And therefore since it is evident, that Christ intended that all his Disciples should live in Unity with each other, which he so strictly enjoins, and so passionately recommends; we must conclude, That he has appointed some effectual means to end all Controversies, and to unite them in one Communion, which can be no other than an Infallible and Governing Head. Now in Answer to this I consider,

1. That a Supreme visible Head, as suppose the Pope of *Rome*, is not necessary and essential to the Unity of the Church; for if all Christian Churches lived in Communion with each other, they would be one Church, though they were all equal, without owning the Supremacy of one over the rest. And therefore that Christ instituted but one Church, and requires all the several parts of it to live in Communion with each other, does not prove the necessity of one Visible Head, because they may be one without such a Head, and it is easy to prove, that this is all the Unity Christ intended; but of this in Answer to the following Papers.

2. Though Christ has made Unity necessary with the necessity of Duty, it does not hence follow, that he has appointed infallible and necessary means of Unity. I suppose all men will grant, that Christ has made Holiness as necessary as Unity, and yet he has appointed no necessary and infallible Means to keep men from Sin; but we see the state of the Church suffers as much by the Wickedness, as by the Divisions of her Members; Unity is a necessary Duty, and so is Holiness, but the practice of both is the Object of our own choice and liberty; and if the Commands and Exhortations of the Gospel, and the hopes and fears of another World, with the assistances of the Divine Grace, will not make men do their Duty, I know of nothing else that can; and I do not see, how Christ is more concerned for the Unity, than for the Holiness of his Church.

3. For

3. For, Thirdly, I think it a great Mistake, to attribute all diversities of Opinions to want of Evidence; and all Divisions to diversities of Opinions; for it is plain, that the Lusts and Interests of men have a great hand in both, or else both Heresies and Schisms are more innocent things than I took them to be. All the World cannot preserve men, who have any Interest to serve by it, from being Hereticks; for Interest will make men teach Heresies without believing them, or believe them without reason; and Interest and Faction will divide the Church, where the Faith is the same, of which the *Donatists* of old are a sad Example. And there is a present and sensible Example of this, which the *Romanists* must own; and yet if they own it, it utterly destroys all their Pretences to Infallibility and Supremacy, as such certain and infallible Remedies for Heresie and Schism. For they must say, as they do, That Christ has vested St. Peter and his Successors, the Popes of Rome, with the Supremacy of the Church; here then is their infallible Cure of Schism: How then come all those Schisms that are in the Church? For there are a good number of them, notwithstanding the Popes Supremacy, and some more for that Reason; Has not Christ appointed an Head of Unity? Yes; but other Bishops and Churches won't submit to him. How? not to Christs Vicar? How comes this to pass? Why, they dispute his Authority: And has not Christ plainly given him this Authority? Yes; but they won't see it: But is this inculpable Ignorance, or Pride and Faction? If the first, then they must grant, there wants certain Evidence for this infallible Head, and this they must not say; if the second, then the Vices of men will make the Institution of a Supreme Head as ineffectual to prevent Schisms, as the Commands of our Saviour are; and it argues a good degree of Assurance in the Church of Rome, to pretend the necessity of an infallible Head and Judge of Controversies, to prevent Heresies and Schisms, when though they say, That Christ has appointed such a Head and Judge, yet the Experience of the World for Sixteen hundred years, tells us, That there are never the fewer Heresies nor Schisms for it; by which it appears, That this is not an infallible Remedy against them.

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Well! but it would be so, if all men would submit to the Authority of this infallible Judge: Very right! and so any other way would do, in which all men would agree, for then I guess they would be all of a mind; but this gives no advantage to an infallible Judge above any other means of Union, and therefore the necessity of Unity does not prove the necessity of an infallible Judge. For if the *Romanists* be in the right, that Christ did appoint such a Judge, and such a Judge be such an infallible Means of Unity, we should have had no dispute about it at this day; and therefore they must be out in one, either Christ has appointed no such Judge, or this cannot prevent Schisms in the Church.

4 Fourthly, There is an easie and effectual way of curing Church Divisions without a Judge of Controversies, nay, without making all men of a Mind in every thing; which must never be expected in this World: And that is, not to make the necessary Terms of Communion streighter and narrower than Christ has made them; nothing but what is plainly revealed in Scripture, and is essential to Christian Faith and Worship. For such Matters most Christians agree in, and though they may have some private Opinions of their own, this ought not to divide Communions, while they do not impose them upon the Faith of others, nor introduce any new and strange Worship into the Christian Church.

As for Example: The Church of *England* believes and practices whatever was thought necessary in the Apostles days, and for some Ages after; and there is little or no dispute about these Matters between us and the Church of *Rome*, so that we could to this day, without a Judge of Controversies, maintain Communion with the Church of *Rome* upon the same Terms that the Apostolick Churches maintained Communion with each other, for we both agree in all things which are necessary and essential to Church Communion. So that the Schism between us and the Church of *Rome* is not for want of a Judge of Controversies, for without owning such a Judge, we agree in all that is necessary, in all that Christ and his Apostles required to make us Members of the Christian Church. But this will not satisfy the Church of *Rome*, which will receive no other Churches into her Communion, with-
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out owning her Sovereign and Supreme Authority, nor without believing many Doctrines manifestly absurd in themselves, and never taught in the best and purest Ages of the Church; nor without joyning in such a Worship, which they themselves dare not say is necessary (for they do not pretend that for their Praying to Saints, and worshipping Images, and Prayers in an unknown Tongue) and which we think is sinful. If these things were removed, we could gladly Communicate with them upon true Catholick Principles. There is no need of a Judge, but only to determine those Controversies, which She her self has made in contradiction to the Primitive Faith of Christians; and therefore I cannot but commend her policy, that She will allow no body to be Judge of these Disputes but her self. Would all men submit to the Church of *Rome*, it would certainly restore Peace and Unity to the Church, but to the great prejudice of Truth, and hazard of mens Souls, and we must not purchase a meer external Unity at this rate. Those men over-value Unity, who part with Truth for it; for certainly the Unity of the Church is not more considerable than the purity of its Faith and Worship.

The Paper.

These Reasons make me think a visible Judge absolutely necessary.

Answer.

What I have already discoursed, I hope, may occasion some new and different thoughts of this Matter; but since Certainty is the great and prevailing Argument, let us turn the Tables, and see what Certainty a *Roman* Catholick has. His Faith is resolved into the Authority of a visible and infallible Judge. This I confess bids very fair, for he that follows an infallible Guide cannot err; but whoever considers this Matter carefully, will find all this talk of *Infallibility* dwindle into nothing. For,

First, Suppose there be an infallible Judge, before we can with certainty and assurance rely on him, we must certainly know

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know who he is; for it is the same thing to have no infallible Judge, and not to know where to find him. And this is a difficulty which those Persons little consider, who please themselves so much with the fancy of *infallibility*. For,

1. Papists themselves are not agreed about this Matter. Some will have the Pope to be infallible, as *Peters* Successor, and in his right. Others, the Church assembled in a General Council; Others, neither Pope nor Council distinctly and separately considered, but a Council confirmed by the Pope: Others, none of all this, but Tradition is infallible. Infallibility they all agree to, but know not where this Infallibility is seated. Now what shall a doubting Protestant do, who has a mind to be as infallible as any of them, did he know where to find this Infallibility? May he not as easily choose his own Religion, and what Church he will live in Communion with, as which of these infallible Judges to follow? Which soever of these he rejects; he has a considerable party of the Church of *Rome* on his side; the only difference is, that he is so far satisfied with their Reasons against each other, that he rejects them all; and he has good Reason for it; for if God had intended to appoint a Judge to end all Disputes, certainly he would have done this so manifestly, that there should have been no dispute who this Judge is: For methinks a doubtful and disputable Judge is not a very proper Person to end all Disputes.

2. Nay, according to the Doctrine of the Roman Divines, it is not possible to prove either that there is such a Judge, or who this Judge is. For if there be such a Judge; he must be appointed by Christ, and then we must look for his Commission in the Gospel; and yet the Church of *Rome* will not allow us to know what the Gospel is, or what is the Sense and Interpretation of it, but from the infallible Judge. And thus it is impossible to find out either the Judge or the Scriptures, because we have no place to begin at. If we begin with the Judge, we are a little too hasty, because we have not yet found him; and if we begin with the Scriptures, that is as bad, because we cannot understand them, before we have found the Judge; so that we must take one of them for granted without any proof, and by that find out the other, and that

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is neither better nor worse, than to take them both for granted, which is an admirable Foundation for Infallibility, at all adventures to choose an infallible Judge, and then to believe him at all adventures!

So that though men, who have always been brought up in the belief of an infallible Judge, may in time grow very confident of it, and take it for a first Principle, which needs no proof; yet I wonder how any Protestant, who has been taught otherwise, and if he acts wisely and like an honest man, cannot believe it, till it is proved to him, can ever entertain such a thought; for let his Adversary be never so subtil, if he resolves to believe nothing but what he sees proved, he may maintain his ground against him. As to represent this briefly in a Dialogue between a Papist and a Protestant.

Papist. I pity your Condition, Sir, to see you live at such uncertainties for your Religion, and obstinately refuse to consult that living Oracle and infallible Judge, whom God hath placed in his Church, to decide all Controversies in Faith and Worship.

Protest. Sir, I thank you for your Charity; and though I do not find my self so uncertain, as I perceive you think I am, yet I should be glad of such an infallible Guide as you talk of, if I knew where to find him.

Pap. He is to be found in the Church of Rome; for that is the Church which is the Pillar and Ground of Truth; there is St. Peter's Chair, whom Christ made the Supreme Governour of his Church, whom he commanded to feed his Lambs and his Sheep; that Rock on whom Christ promised to build his Church, and that the Gates of Hell should not prevail against it; and therefore in Communion with this Church, and in obedience to the Supreme Pastor of it, you cannot err.

Pro. But pray, how shall I be sure of this?

Pap. Do you ask that now, when I have referred you to such plain Texts of Scripture for the proof of it?

Pro. Will you allow me then to interpret these Texts according to my own private judgment? and why then may I not use my judgment in other matters; for I think all the Articles of my Creed are as plain in Scripture, as that the Pope or Church of Rome is the Supreme infallible Judge; and indeed if I must stand to my own judgment in this matter, I can find

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find no such thing in these Texts you have alledged.

Pap. Your own judgment! no by no means, this causes all the Heresies in the World, that men will presume to judge for themselves.

Prot. What course must I take then?

Pap. You must stand to the judgment of the Church, which cannot err; and whatever Hereticks say, she will tell you, that these Texts prove the Churches Infallibility.

Prot. Hold Sir, what is it we are to prove?

Pap. That the Church is Infallible.

Prot. And this I must prove from Scripture.

Pap. Yes.

Prot. And must not rely on my own judgment neither for the sense of Scripture, but on the interpretation of the Church.

Pap. Right! This is the true Catholick Way.

Prot. That is, I must take the Churches word that she is Infallible.

Pap. No, you must believe the Scripture, which says so.

Prot. But I must believe the Scripture, not because I understand this to be the sense of it, but because the Church so expounds it.

Pap. Right! for Hereticks expound it otherwise.

Prot. And what is this then but to take the Churches word for her own Infalibility? What difference is there between taking the Churches word at the first or second rebound? To believe it, because she says it her self; or to believe it because she makes the Scripture say it? And therefore if this be all you have to say, I must e'en keep where I am, and rather content my self without an infallible Judge, than please my self with a meer imagination of Infalibility without any Foundation to rely on.

Thirdly, And therefore the most learned Advocates of the Church of Rome are forced to grant, that we have no infallible Assurance of Infalibility; for we cannot be infallibly certain which the true Church is. The only way they pretend to find out the true Church, is by Marks and Notes of a Church, which they say indeed have a Moral certainty, though they are not infallible: For according to their Principles,

ciples, they must not allow of any Infallibility without the sentence and definition of an infallible Judge, for then Protestants may set up for Infallibility without a Judge of Controversies; and therefore since there can be no infallible Judge to determine who is the Judge of Controversies, they must content themselves in this matter with Moral certainty; and this brings them to an even level with poor fallible Protestants. They deal very hardly with us, if they will not allow that we may have at least as much certainty of the Authority of Scripture, and the true Sense and Interpretation of it; as they can have of the Notes of the true Church, which must be owned for the infallible Judge; and if they be modest, and understand the weakness of their own Cause, they ought to be very thankful to us, if we will allow them as much; and may not we then be as infallible as they? For indeed it is impossible that any Moral certainty should grow up into Infallibility.

As for instance: No man can be more certain of the Decisions of an infallible Judge, than he is of his Infallibility; and therefore if he have not an infallible certainty of the Infallibility of the Judge, he can't have an infallible certainty that he defines infallibly: And thus the whole Faith of a Papist, after all their brags of Infallibility, is resolved into Moral certainty; just as the Faith of a Protestant is; only not with so much reason. Let us take any one Article of our Faith, wherein Papists and Protestants agree, and see how much greater assurance Papists have of it than Protestants: As suppose that *Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God*. A Protestant believes this, because he has all the Evidence that we can have for any thing of that nature; that the Scriptures of the New Testament were writ by inspired men, and that the words of Scripture in their most plain and obvious acceptation signify this, and therefore that this is the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, who were infallible Teachers: So that the last Resolution of our Faith is into the Infallibility of Christ and his Apostles, which we have all the Evidence of which Sense and Reason can give us. On the other hand; a Papist believes that Christ is the Eternal Son of God, because the Church, which is infallible, teaches so; and he finds

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out the true Church by some Notes and Marks of a Church, which he thinks morally certain; and when he has found the true Church, concludes her to be infallible without more ado. Now if the Infallibility of Christ and his Apostles, be as good a Reason of Faith as the Infallibility of the Church or Pope of Rome, and if we have as good Evidence that the Gospel was writ by inspired men, and that such words are contained in the Gospel, as prove Christ to be the Son of God, as they have of their Marks and Notes whereby they find out the true Church, then we have to the full as much certainty and Infallibility as they have. They have but a Moral Evidence at best of the Infallibility of their Church, and therefore are but morally certain what their Church teaches right; and therefore if we have as much certainty as they have (and God forbid we should have no more) our Faith is built upon as sure a Foundation as theirs, without making a noise with Infallibility, which at last dwindles into some Arbitrary Notes and Marks of a Church.

And yet Fourthly, not to trouble our selves at present with all the Notes and Marks which Cardinal *Bellarmino* and others give of a true Church, there is one Mark, without which it is impossible we should be certain which is the true Church, and that is, that she professes the true Faith and Worship of Christ. For this is essential to the Church, and there can be no Church without it: all other Marks may deceive us; for whatever other Marks there be, if there be not the true Faith and Worship of Christ, there cannot be the true Church; and therefore when the State of the Church, as it is at this day, is broken and divided into different and opposite Communion, whoever will find out the true Church, must examine her Doctrine and Worship. *Bellarmino* himself makes the Holiness of Doctrine one essential Mark of the true Church, and yet Truth is antecedent to Holiness, and equally essential. Now this is such a Mark of an infallible Church, as makes her Infallibility useless, when we have found her. For we must understand the true Religion before we can know the true Church, and can be no more certain, which is the true Church, than we are which is the true Religion; and therefore cannot resolve our Faith into the Authority of the

the Church, because we can know the true Church only by the true Faith, and therefore must have some other means of finding out the true Faith antecedent to the Churches Authority; for that which is a mark to know something else by, must be first known it self. So that whereas the Churches Authority is thought so compendious a way to make men infallibly certain of their Religion, and to deliver them from those uncertain Disputes that are in the World, we cannot be certain which the true Church is on whose Authority we must rely, till we have examined that diversity of Opinions which divide the Christian Church, and have satisfied our selves on which side the Truth lies; and when we have done this, it is too late to appeal to a Judge, unless we will undo all we had done before, and then we shall be to seek again which is the true Church. And what advantages then has the Papist above the Protestant in the point of Certainty? When they cannot know which is that Church which they may safely trust, without examining the truth of her Religion, and judging for themselves, just as we do. We are concerned indeed to know which is the true Catholick Church, not that we must receive our Faith upon her Authority; for in order of Nature we must know the true Faith, before we can know the true Church, but because we are bound to live in Communion with the true Catholick Church of Christ.

Fifthly, And yet if they could find the Church without all this trouble, and Protestant uncertainty, wherever they place their Infallibility, whether in the Pope or Council, according to their own Principles, they cannot have so much as a Moral certainty of it. As for the Pope, though for Arguments sake we should grant a true Pope to be infallible, yet it is impossible that any man can be certain, that there is a true Pope. For the Church of *Rome* teaches, That the intention of the Priest is necessary to the Sacrament; that though he perform all the external part of it, yet if he do not intend to apply the Sacrament to such Persons, it is not applied. Now according to these Principles, who can tell whether this present Pope were ever Baptized, or Ordained Priest or Bishop; for if the Priests or Bishops that did this

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did not intend to do it, he is so far from being a true Pope, that he is no Christian. Nay, if the Priests and Bishops which Baptized and Ordained him, did intend to apply the Sacraments to him, yet if those who Baptized and Ordained them did not intend to do it, then they were no Christians nor Bishops themselves, and therefore could not confer Orders on him, and so upwards still, which reduces the matter to the greatest uncertainty in the World; for how is it possible to know any mans private Intention, when neither Words nor Actions shall be allowed a sufficient declaration of it: And besides this, if a Pope be Simoniacally promoted, or Ordained by a Simoniacal Pope, here is an invalidity in his Orders, and then what becomes of his Infalibility? Nay, what shall we say of that long Papal Schism, when there were three Popes together, *John 23. Gregory 12. and Benedict 13.* who were all Deposed by the Council of *Constance*, and *Martin 5.* chose? Was there never a true Pope among all the Three? If there were, What Authority then had the Council to Depose them all, and chuse a Fourth? And who knows to this day from whence the succeeding Popes have derived their Succession? which may very much call the Poppedom and Infalibility into question. And then as for Councils, which consist of Bishops, there is the same uncertainty about them, whether they be true Bishops or not, as there is about the Pope; and besides this, there are so many Disputes, what makes a General Council when it is regularly called, and when they act *Counciliariter*, in such a manner as a Council ought to act, to procure the infallible Directions of the Spirit, and to give Authority to their Decrees, that if Woemen and Basse People cannot understand the Scriptures, and the Reasons of their Faith, I am sure they are much less able to understand what Councils they may safely rely on.

But suppose we did know who this infallible Judge is, whether Pope or Council, and this Judge should give us an infallible Interpretation of Scripture, and an infallible Decision of all Controversies in Religion, which the Church of *Rome* never could be perswaded to do yet, and I believe never will, witness those many fierce Disputes which are among

mong men of their own Communion; and I think no man is ever the more infallible for a Judge, who will not exercise his Infallibility; yet if this Judge should infallibly determine all the Controversies in Religion, we must either hear it from his own Mouth, or receive it in Writing, or take it upon the report of others. As for the first of these, there is not one in the World at this day, that was present at the Debates of any General Council, or heard them pronounce their Decrees and Definitions, and I believe as few ever heard the Pope determine any Question *ex Cathedra*, which what it means, either they do not well understand, or have no mind to tell us. As for Writing; when we see the Decrees of a Council written, we can have only a Moral assurance that these are the Decrees of the Council; and when we have them, it may be they are much more obscure, and subject to as many different Interpretations as the Scriptures are, that we can have no better assurance what the sense of the Council, than what the sense of the Scripture is; as Experience tells us it is in the Council of *Trent*, which the *Roman* Doctors differ as much about, as Protestants do about the sense of Scripture; and though the Pope of *Rome* be made the Judge of the Sense of Councils, yet if he will not determine it, what are we the better? If one Pope approves Cardinal *Bellarmin*'s Exposition of the Council, and another *M. de Meaux*, though directly opposite to each other, as we see at this day, how shall we ever come to an infallible Certainty what the Council has determined? Has not a Protestant, who studies the Scripture, and uses the best Reason and Judgment he has to understand it, as much Certainty and Infallibility as this comes to? And yet how few are there, that have Time or Learning to Read the Councils, which is a little more difficult than to Read the Scriptures in the Vulgar Tongue; and all these Men must trust entirely to the honesty of their Priest, who, if he be honest, may be very ignorant, and yet the last resolution of the Peoples Infallibility is into the honesty and skill of their Priests; for how infallible soever the Pope or Council be, they know no more of the matter than what their Priests tell them, which is such an Infallibility as the meanest Protestant has no reason to envy.

This

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This I think is sufficient to shew, how vain all this Talk of *Infallibility* is in the Church of *Rome*: though Protestants own themselves to be fallible Creatures, yet they are too wise to change their Moral Certainty for the Popish *Infallibility*. Had the Church of *Rome* as good Evidence for their Faith as the Church of *England*, it might admit of a Dispute, whether they should reject both, or cast Lots which to chuse; but thanks be to God, there is no comparison between them, and while we feel our selves certain, let who will boast they are infallible.

A N

A N
A N S W E R
 To some other
A R G U M E N T S
 Contained in the
P A P E R S.

HAVING thus largely considered the main support of the Roman Cause at this day, viz. the Pretence of an infallible Judge of Controversies, the remaining Arguments will be more briefly answered, which I shall set down in order as I find them.

The Paper.

I don't know, supposing the Roman Errors not damnable, how the Reformers can justify themselves; and if they were so, I can't make it agree with the Promises of the Gates of Hell never prevailing, &c. except there were some other Church in which Purity of Faith was preserved; which if there were, I wonder for Unities sake so much commanded in Scripture, we did not joyn with that pure Church.

Answer.

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Answer.

In answer to this short Paragraph, there are several things to be considered: 1. Whether the Errors of the Church of *Rome* be damnable. 2. If they be not damnable, what Authority had the Church of *England* to reform them. 3. If they be damnable, how does Christ keep his Promise to his Church, *That the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* 4. Concerning the Purity of Faith in other Churches, and our Union with them.

1. As for the first, *Whether the Church of Rome be guilty of damnable Errors*: If by damnable Errors be meant such Errors as put men into a state of damnation, this I dare not say: For this would out-do the Church of *Rome* herself in uncharitableness, to assert that all the Churches in the *Roman* Communion, and every Member of them as such, are in a state of damnation. But if by damnable Errors be meant such Errors as are very dangerous to mens Souls, and will greatly hazard their Salvation, or such Errors as involve a Sin in them, as being a direct Breach of some Divine Law and so are damnable as every sin is damnable; in this Sense we do say that the Church of *Rome* is guilty of damnable Errors. For to name no other at present, we do affirm and prove too, That the Worship of Saints and Angels and Images are express Violations of the first and second Commandments, and therefore are great Sins against God.

Now if you inquire, what the difference is between being guilty of damnable sins, and being in a state of damnation, the Answer is plain and easy: For a state of damnation is such a state wherein, if a man commit damning sins, he has no right and title to Pardon, Forgiveness, and Salvation, though he repent of all his known and unknown sins. This is the condition of all those who are not received into the Christian Church by Faith and Baptism; for the Christian Church only is a state of Salvation; For there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby men can be saved, but only the Name of Christ. So that those who are out of the Church and Gospel Covenant, are not only guilty of damning sins, but are in a state of damnation, for they have no Covenant-right to Pardon and Salvation.

vation. But those who believe in Christ, and are in Covenant with him by Baptism, though they may be guilty of damning sins, yet they are not in a state of damnation, because they have a right to Pardon upon their Repentance; and this is the Condition of the Church of Rome; they profess the true Faith of Christ, and are in Covenant with him by Baptism, and therefore though they may be guilty of damning Errors, yet they are in a state of Salvation, that is, they are not excluded from the Covenant of Grace; and therefore the Members of that Communion, who live virtuous lives, and heartily repent of all their known and unknown sins, may find Mercy with God. Thus St. Paul tells us of those who build upon the Foundation, that is, Faith in Christ Jesus, that if they build hay and stubble upon this Foundation, that is, false and erroneous Doctrines and Worship, such a man shall suffer loss in that his work shall be burnt, yet he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire, 1 Cor. 3. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. where Fire cannot refer to the Fire of Purgatory, because it is the Fire of the Day of Judgment, which is called the Day that shall be revealed by Fire, ver. 13. and the works which shall be burnt, is the hay and stubble which is built on the Foundation; that is, those erroneous Doctrines or corrupt Worship which men retain together with the Faith of Christ; these Works shall be burnt, that is, condemned in that day which is revealed by Fire, which consumes those Works, as Fire does hay and stubble: And as for the Persons themselves, the Apostle tells us that they shall suffer loss, that they shall be saved, but so as by fire. Where to suffer loss is opposed to receiving a Reward; if a man's work abide, he shall receive a reward; if a man's work be burnt, he shall suffer loss; which plainly signifies, that such erroneous Christians shall not receive such a reward as is prepared for sound and orthodox Believers: And that Phrase, so be saved, but so as by fire, at least signifies, that at the Day of Judgment such men shall very difficultly escape burning with their works, though they shall be finally saved by their Faith in Christ. But whatever be the meaning of some particular Phrases in this obscure Text, so much is very plain in it; that men who build hay and stubble upon the Foundation, i.e. who believe in Christ, though with a mixture of many vain and hurtful Superstitions, shall yet, if their lives be holy and virtuous, be saved by the Faith of Christ, though with some loss and

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hazard; which makes the case of honest men, who live in very corrupt Communions, not perfectly hopeless. And in this sense it is that we grant, That Salvation may be had in the Church of *Rome*; though this is no reason for any man to choose the Communion of a corrupt Church, because there is a possibility of Salvation in it. However, this shews what a great mistake this Paper is guilty of, where it is said, *That the best Christians in the Church of Rome, which believe such damnable Doctrines, can be saved only by Ignorance, which most Protestant Divines believe the Pagans themselves may be.* For though invincible Ignorance is an equal excuse for Pagans and Christians, yet when this excuse is allowed, Pagans have not such a right to Salvation as Christians have. Ignorance may excuse, but cannot save. It is only Faith in Christ saves us, which corrupt Christians have, and Pagans have not, which is an essential difference.

Secondly, Suppose the Errors of the Church were not damnable, why might not the Church of *England* reform such Errors as are not damnable? Suppose they only obscure the Glory of Christ's Mediation, and are dangerous temptations to sin, or hinder the Edification of the Church, or betray men to false Notions of God and of Religion, though they are not in themselves damnable, why may not such Errors as these be reformed? If the Church of *Rome* were convinced that she were guilty of such Errors, ought she not to reform her self? And is not every Church in duty bound, to preserve her Faith and Worship as pure and uncorrupt as she can? And why then is not the Church of *England* bound to do so? If indeed the Church of *Rome* had a Supreme Power over the Church of *England*, that nothing could be done without her Approbation and Order, then we would grant, that in case of tolerable Errors, such a dependent Church could not reform it self, without the consent of its Superiour; as no private Christian can reform the Church wherein he lives, without the consent of the Governours of it. But we say, that every National Church has the Supreme Independent Power within herself, and therefore may correct any abuses and corruptions which are crept into her Communion, without asking leave of the Bishop of *Rome*, or any other Church in the World; and this justifies the Reformation of the Church of *England*, if she reformed
nothing

nothing but what was erroneous, though the Errors were not damnable; for all Errors ought to be reformed when they are known, if the Reformers have just Authority to do it; and such Errors as are damnable, will justify any man to reform himself, and all that he can convince of such Errors; for every man has Authority to save his Soul.

Thirdly, If the Church of Rome be guilty of damnable Errors, how does Christ perform his Promise to his Church, *That the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*? Now the difficulty of this Objection consists only in the sound of those Phrases, *The Gates of Hell*; by which some understand, That the Devil shall never be able to corrupt the Faith of the Church, for if he can do that, then say they, he prevails against the Church. But *not* *shall* signify only Destruction; for *Hades* is properly the state of Dead men, who are laid under-ground, and appear no more in this World; and therefore when our Saviour promises, *That the Gates of Hades shall not prevail against his Church*, the meaning is, that there shall always be a Church in the World, professing that Faith which he & Peter had professed, and whereon Christ promised to build his Church, *viz. That Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God*. And such a Church there has been in the World ever since; and the Church of Rome it self, notwithstanding all the Corruptions that are in it, is such a Church.

But that the Church may be over-run with great and damning Errors, is evident from St. Paul's Prediction of the Apostacy of the later days, *When the Man of Sin shall be revealed, the Son of Perdition, who as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*; 2 Thess. 2. 3, 4. For whosoever this Man of Sin is, he sits in the Temple of God; that is, in the true Church of Christ; and while the Man of Sin sits in the Church, we need not doubt, but he brings some damning Errors with him; and yet it is the Temple of God, even when the Man of Sin sits there.

Fourthly, As for the last thing mentioned, it is sufficiently known, that there were a great many Christian Churches in the World, at the time of the Reformation, who did not own the Usurpations of the Church of Rome; and though they might have Errors of their own, yet not of such fatal consequence: But if all the Christian World had been equally

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corrupted at that time, it had been the same thing to us; for Corruptions ought to be reformed, and we had Authority to reform our selves. And as for joyning in Communion with other pure Churches, we do so; we own all pure Churches, nay, are ready to communicate with Churches which have some Corruptions in their Constitution, if they be tolerable, and do not render their Communion sinful, which is all the Obligation we have to communicate with any Church: For if by Communion they mean, that we should have put our selves under the Government and Authority of any other Church, (which is the Sense of Communion in the Church of *Rome*, which thinks no Church in Communion with her without submitting to her Authority) we beg their pardon for that; we will communicate with other Churches, as Friends and Equals and Brethren, but not as Subjects.

Secondly, The next Argument for a visible Judge, which the Paper insists on, is, *That without such a Judge, we cannot know that every particular Book of Scripture is Canonical.* And here are a great many Objections started against the Authority and certainty of the Canon, which much more become Scepticks and Infidels, than Christians of any Communion. I do not think them worth transcribing, for this Argument may be answered without answering these Objections, which the Church of *Rome* is as much concerned to answer, as we. For those who originally made these Objections, will not be put off with the Authority of a Judge, without a rational Solution of these Difficulties; and those, who grant, that there is no other Answer can be given to them, but to resolve the credit of the Canon into the Authority of a Judge without any other Reason, give up the Cause of Christianity to Infidels, who despise the vain pretences of such a Judge.

If we cannot know what is Canonical Scripture without a Judge, how shall we know whether there be a Judge? For there is no way to know this but by the Scriptures; if there be no such Judge appointed in Scripture, we have no reason to own him, and if we cannot tell what Scripture is without a Judge, how shall we find the Judge by the Scriptures? And though the Objection be made only against some particular Books of Scripture, yet in such it equally lies against the whole Canon. For if we can know any one particular Book

of Scripture without a Judge, why not the rest? No! some of them have been doubted of, Right! by some Churches, who did not know them, till they were satisfied by those Churches, which kept those Sacred Records, that they were true and genuine. But the Question is, Whether a Book, which has been doubted of, when that Doubt is removed, have not as certain Authority as the rest. If it could not then, and cannot to this day be proved to be genuine, why is it received? What Obligation are we under to own it? If any Books, which we call Canonical, were still doubtful, it is more natural and reasonable to reject them, than to set up a Judge without any Authority, to give Authority to them. For whether any Book of Scripture be Canonical is matter of Fact, and the Doctors of the Church of Rome themselves do not extend Infallibility to matters of Fact; and then by their own confession, there can be no infallible Judge of the Canon of Scripture, but we must content our selves with such Moral Certainty as may be had. And if Catholic Tradition be so uncertain, that we cannot learn the Canon of Scripture from it, what becomes of the Authority of all their unwritten Traditions, which they so much boast of? Thus some men, if they can but make a shew of saying any thing, never attend to Consequences, nor consider whether their Objections do not make as much against themselves, and common Christianity, as against Protestants.

Thirdly, The last Argument is, That the Author of the Paper can't make those Articles of the Nicene Creed, *One Holy Catholic Apostolick Church, the Communion of Saints*, agree with the Protestant Religion. Here is a little blunder in calling this the Nicene Creed, though easily pardonable; for it is a jumble of the Apostles and Nicene Creed together. *The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints*, is in the Apostles Creed; *One Catholic Apostolick Church*, the Nicene Creed. And why does not this agree with the Protestant Religion? For we profess to believe both these Creeds as sincerely, as the Church of Rome.

No! How can they be One, who disagree by adding in Faith, or diminishing from it, who do not communicate together in Prayer or Sacraments, when they are not agreed in the Essential things, how are they One? Right! Churches which

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which differ in Essentials are not One, but I hope there are few Churches do that; I am sure they can never prove, that we deny any Essential and Fundamental Article of Faith. If this proves any thing, it proves, That all the separate Communions of Christendom are not One Church; and what then? How is the Church of *England* more concerned in this, than the Church of *Rome*? Can't we believe One Church in the Creed, as well as the Church of *Rome*, notwithstanding all the Divisions of Christendom? Do the meer Divisions of Christendom prove the Church of *Rome* to be that One Church, or that the Church of *England* is no Member of this One Church in the Creed? The Church is but One, from the first planting of it by the Apostles to the End of the World, and the Church of *Rome*, as well as We, must own, that it is but One Church, notwithstanding the several Divisions that have been in it in the first Ages of the Church as well as now; and therefore the Unity and Communion of the Church must not be estimated by any one Age of the Church; but the Apostolick Age must be the Standard of Catholick Unity and Communion, as it is of the Catholick Faith.

Suppose all the Churches of the World at this day were in Communion with the Church of *Rome*, excepting the Church of *England*. Why then, you'll say, it would be plain the Church of *England* were separated from the whole Church of Christ, and from Catholick Communion. Right! from the Church of this Age, but the whole Church of this Age is but a very little part of the Catholick Church, where it is sound and Orthodox; for I hope they will allow the Apostolick Churches, and the Churches of the three first Ages, to be the best and purest parts of this One Catholick Church, and that we must still maintain Communion with them; if then the Church of *England* were separated from all the Churches of this Age, yet if she be in Communion with the Apostolick and Primitive Churches she is in Catholick Communion still, if the Apostles themselves were in Catholick Communion. To know then, whether the Church of *England* be a true Catholick Church, and in Catholick Communion, we are not so much concerned to enquire what Churches she communicates with now, as whether she be in the

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the Apostolick Communion, which is the Fountain and Original of Catholick Communion. Now if the Constitution of the Church of *England* be such as to Doctrine, Worship, and Government, that the Apostles themselves would have owned our Communion, had we been in their days; how do we come to be Schismatics now, and out of Catholick Communion? For if Catholick Communion be the Communion of the whole Catholick Church, from the Times of Christ and his Apostles to the end of the world, which is but one Church; and the Apostolick Churches are the true Measure and Standard of true Catholick Communion, then those Churches, which to this day are in Communion with the Apostles, are in true Catholick Communion. And this Test we will stand by, though I would not advise the Church of *Rome* to do so.

Let us consider, whether the Apostles would have rejected our Communion for those Reasons, for which the Church of *Rome* now rejects us? Would *St. Paul* have rejected our Communion, because we will not worship God in an Unknown Tongue? which he himself forbids, *1 Cor. 14.* because we will not worship Saints and Angels, and Images? which the *Romanists* confess, was neither commanded, nor practised in those days, and which we say was forbid then, and understood to be so by all Christians. For not owning the Supremacy of *Peter*, when *St. Paul* himself withstood him as much, as we do the Pope of *Rome*, and upon a much less occasion, *Gal. 2. 11. &c.* And the *African* Churches long after, in the days of *St. Cyprian*, and by his Authority, forbid all Appeals to the Bishop or Church of *Rome*. In a word, would the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, the Sacrifice of the Mass, Indulgences, Purgatory, Communion in one kind, private and solitary Masses, and the like, have been thought a just Reason in the Apostles days to deny Communion to all those Churches, which reject them?

The Church of *England* is in Communion with all those Churches from the Apostles days till now, who never owned nor imposed those Doctrines and Practices, for which we now Separate from the Church of *Rome*, as necessary Terms of Communion, which upon inquiry will be found a much more Catholick Communion than that of the Church of *Rome*; for we communicate with more Ages, and with more Churches than they do. The Church of *Rome*, as now constituted in all

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its parts and proportions, is no older than the Council of *Trent*, which is some time since *Luther*; that we may with more reason ask them, *Where their Church was before the Council of Trent* then they ask us, *Where our Church was before Luther*? We find our Church in its Doctrine, Worship, and Government, in the Apostles days; but their Church was not made all at a time, but one Age brought in one Corruption, another another. Some aspiring Popes began the Encroachments upon the Liberties of other Churches, and others kept the ground their Predecessors had got, and as they had opportunity made new Conquests, and thus by degrees it grew up into a Papal Omnipotency. Some thinking Monks started some uncouth Opinions, which were talked about for a while in Disputes, and if they were such as might be of use to advance the Power of the Pope, or of the Priest, they began to be countenanced at *Rome*, and that made honest men cautious of Opposing; and then they grew up into received Doctrines, and when it was ripe for that purpose, they were dubbed Articles of Faith; and at length were digested into method and order, refined and polished, and received their last Authority from the pack'd Conventicle of *Trent*. And will any man call this Catholick Communion, the dividing Terms of which were wholly unknown to the best and purest Ages of the Church, crept in by degrees in several later Ages, and never received its accomplishment and perfection till since the Reformation it self, and is now already in the wane, and almost expounded into Protestant Heresie (at least so they would persuade us) by the Bp. of *Meaux*, and our Modern Representers. However this shews, how among all the Divisions of Christendom, we can prove our selves to be a Catholick Church, and in Catholick Communion, which is all that we at present are concerned for; and let the Church of *Rome* do as much for herself, if she can. Upon these Principles she now rejects us, it is plain, she must have denied Communion to the Apostolick Churches, and I am sure they would have denied Communion to her; and what is become then of her Catholick Communion, which shuts out the Apostles and Apostolick Churches?

The Paper.

And, how in the Communion of Saints? For that which I think makes

makes a Corporation become a Body of Men; is the Obligation imposed on those who live in that Corporation, to be subject to the peculiar Laws and Government there established for even of those that make Scripture their Rule of all those Churches.

Answer.

I suppose the latter part of this is either false or hastily writ: If the meaning be, that the whole Christian Church in such a Corporation as is under the same individual Government, or one governing Head, who must give Laws to the whole Church; this we utterly deny, and it ought to have been proved. Christ at first committed the planting and governing his Church to Twelve Apostles, who, as St. Cyprian affirms, had all equal Power and Authority, though Christ named *Peter* only in bestowing the Apostolical Power, not to give *Peter* any Superiority over the rest, but only to signify, that unity and harmony of consent, which ought to be among them in exercising the Apostolical Power, that they were all to act as one Man. The Apostles left their Power to the Bishops of the several Churches, who had the immediate Inspection, and Sovereign Power over their own Churches, as the same Father frequently asserts, but yet were to govern their several Churches with mutual advice and consent. So that the Unity of particular Churches consists in their Obedience and Subjection to their Bishop, and in the Communion of all the Members of it in all acts of Worship and Discipline; and those who separate from the external and visible Communion of the Church wherein they live, without necessary and unavoidable Reasons, are Schismatics, who cut themselves off from the Body of Christ. The Communion of the Catholick Church consists not in the Subjection of one Church to another, but in the Profession of the same Faith, and in the Agreement and Concord of their Bishops, in owning each others Churches, and maintaining Communion with them upon Catholick Principles, and governing their Churches, as far as is expedient, by common Rules of Worship and Discipline. This then being the Constitution of the Catholick Church, let us briefly consider what it is that unites particular Churches in Catholick Communion.

1. Every particular Church which professes the true Faith of Christ, is part of the Catholick Church, and by virtue of this

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Catholick Faith is so far in Communion with the whole Catholick Church; and thus we own the Church of *Rome* her self to be part of the Catholick Church; for she professes the true Faith of Christ, though with a great mixture of dangerous Errors.

2. The Communion of particular Churches does not consist in using the same Liturgies, or external Rites of Worship, if their Worship be a true Christian Worship, and agreeable to the general Laws of the Gospel; for every Church has Authority within her self to direct and model her own Worship; and therefore if there were no fault in it, yet the Church of *England* is not bound to receive her Liturgies and Worship from the Church of *Rome*, but may use her own without being charged with Schism for doing so.

3. Every Catholick Church is bound to receive each others Members to Communion, when they come among them, which makes them all but one Church, one Society & Body, the Members of which have a mutual right and interest in each other; and therefore it is a Principle of Catholick Communion, not to adhere so stiffly to the Rites and Usages of our own particular Churches, as not to communicate with other Churches, who use different Rites from our own, if they be innocent. Thus far all things are plain and easie; but the difficulty is, how we shall maintain Communion with those Churches, which teach very erroneous Doctrines, or use very corrupt and suspected kinds of Worship. And therefore,

Fourthly, How corrupt soever any Church be, if she still retains the true Faith of Christ, we must own her for a Christian Church, though a corrupt one; which is one degree of Communion with her, to own her of the same Body with our selves, though as a sick or rotten Member. This was the charge against the *Novatians* and *Donatists*, not only that they had set up a distinct and separate Communion, but that they unchurched the Catholick Church, and therefore re-baptized those who had been baptized in the Catholick Communion, as if they had been Infidels before. So that if there be any true Church in the world besides the Church of *Rome*, the Church of *Rome* must necessarily be Schismatical, because she unchurches all other Churches but her self, and therefore can have no degree of Communion with them, as with Christian Churches; whereas we own the Church of *Rome* her self to

be a true, though a very corrupt Church, and therefore maintain some degree of Communion with her.

Fifthly, For it is evident, that if any particular Church do teach any erroneous Doctrines, we must not maintain Communion with her in her Errors: for no man is bound to believe that which is false. But then we must distinguish between Errors; for a Church may be guilty of some speculative Errors, which may do no great hurt to common Christianity, and then we may very safely communicate with that Church, if they do not impose on us the belief of those Errors; which few Churches do, but upon their own immediate Members, excepting the Church of *Rome*. As for instance; The *Lutheran* Doctrine of *Consubstantiation* is as false and groundless, though not altogether as absurd as the *Papish* Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; but yet I would make no scruple of communicating with a *Lutheran* Church, where I may do it without professing my belief of *Consubstantiation*; and upon these Principles the *Lutheran* and *Calvinist* Churches may communicate together, keeping their private Opinions to themselves without imposing them upon each other. But if any Church which professes some speculative Errors, will not admit us to Communion without professing the same Errors, we must own them for true Churches still, and profess our readiness to communicate with them in all acts of worship, if we may be allowed to do it without owning their Errors; and this makes us in Communion with that Church, and that we do not actually communicate is none of our fault, but the fault of those who deny it. If the Errors be such as are not merely speculative, but corrupt their worship, then indeed we must not only disclaim their Errors, but we must not joyn in those acts of worship, which are corrupted by them; as the *Papish* Mass is by the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. If their worship be partly pure, and partly corrupt, then notwithstanding their Corruptions we must be ready to joyn with them in all those acts of worship, which are not corrupted. If their worship be generally corrupt, as it is in the Church of *Rome*, by their *Latin Service*, and *Mass*, and *Ave-Maries*, and frequent Addresses to *Saints* and *Angels* in those very *Litanies*, wherein they pray to God and Christ, we must wholly abstain; but admonish and pray for them as Brethren, and exercise all other acts

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of Christian Communion, if they will admit of any.

By this we see, that there are several degrees of Communion between distinct particular Churches, and therefore it does not presently follow, that because Churches divide Communion in acts of Worship, they do not belong to the same Body. The true Catholick Faith, whatever Errors and Corruptions they are guilty of, makes them so far Catholick Churches, and while we own them Members of the same Body, to which we our selves belong, though we do not communicate in their Errors and Corruptions, we are still in Communion with them; and upon these Principles, notwithstanding all the Divisions of Christians, there is but one Church still, to which all Churches belong, who profess the true Faith of Christ, unless any exclude themselves from this Catholick Unity, by wholly excluding others.

Secondly, The next Inquiry in the Paper is, *How the Church can be called Holy, if for so many hundred years, as our Church teaches in the Homily against Idolatry, the whole Church of Rome has been guilty of Idolatry?* This being the whole of the Argument, I shall not transcribe the words. Now suppose the Church of Rome were the whole Church, and had for some Centuries been guilty of Idolatry in the Worship of Saints and Images, and the Virgin Mary; yet they belong to the Holy Church, just as they belong to the Church; by retaining the true Faith of Christ, they are a true Church, though the many Errors they have added, make them a very corrupt Church: And thus by professing the holy Faith, and owning the great Principles and Doctrines of Holiness, they are a Holy Church, though their Holiness may be far from being perfect, intire, and uncorrupt, as well as their Faith.

When Holiness is attributed to the visible Church, it cannot signifie Internal Holiness and Sanctification, for good and bad men are intermixt in the Church; and if the Church must be holy in this sense, all the Members of it must be impeccable as well as infallible. But Holiness signifies either their State or their Profession. That they are in Covenant with God, and so his holy and peculiar People, as the Jews were under the *Mosaicall* Covenant, who are therefore upon this account often called *A holy Nation*, even when they were guilty of Idolatry in worshipping the Golden Calf, and had
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few visible Marks of Holiness in their Lives; and for the same Reason the Christian Church, which now succeeds into the Privileges of the Jewish Synagogue, are called *Saints, the Elect and Chosen People of God*, to signify that now God owns none for his People, but those who are admitted into the Christian Covenant. And in this sense no Church can cease to be a holy Church, without ceasing to be a Church.

But then the Christian Church is holy by Profession too, and that in a more eminent manner than the Jewish Church, because she professes a more perfect Holiness; and whatever Church teaches the holy Commands of our Saviour, and requires and professes Obedience to them, is so far a holy Church by Profession, though she may teach other things, which she may think holy, but indeed are not so. If Holiness signify an External and Visible Relation to God, and the Profession of a holy Religion, then that Society which professes the true Faith of Christ, and Holiness of Life, so as to continue a Covenant Relation to Christ, is in this sense a holy Church, whatever Corruptions she is guilty of, either in Faith or Practice, which do not Un-church her.

Thirdly, As for what remains in the Paper, it has been answered already upon other Occasions. Schism we confess is a damning Sin, and thank God that we are not guilty of it. We cast off the *Roman Yoke*, which Christ never laid upon us, and to deliver our selves from the unjust *Usurpations* of Foreign Churches is no Schism, no more than it is Rebellion to oppose the Invasions of a Foreign Prince. We Reformed our own Communion, and that is no Schism, for we had full Authority to do it; and our Reformation is such, that they may communicate with us, though we cannot communicate with them, for there is nothing sinful in our Communion; and whatever they pretend, they can never prove that there is any thing wanting in it, necessary to Salvation; and when we deny Communion to no Church that will communicate with us, and require no sinful terms of Communion, which can justify a Separation from us, let them tell me, wherein our Schism consists.

The Paper.

I can't think those glorious Promises sufficiently fulfilled, of the Holy

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Holy Spirits leading them into all Truth, and abiding with them, and that for ever.

Answer.

Pray, why not? That Promise of *Leading them into all Truth*, was made to the Apostles, and was fulfilled in them, and extended to no others in that degree of Infallibility; as is evident from the manner how the Spirit was to lead them into all Truth, *viz.* by bringing to their remembrance all things which Christ had said to them, which can belong only to those Persons, who heard the Sermons and Discourses of Christ himself. For though a man may be taught what he never knew before, yet he cannot be said to remember what he never heard before. But when it is added, that this *Spirit of Truth shall abide with them for ever*, that for ever must be appropriated to the Apostles, as it relates to an infallible Direction; and their *for ever*, signifies no longer than they lived; for if it must be extended to all the Successors of the Apostles, then there must be as many infallible Judges as there are Successors to all the Apostles, in the several Churches founded by them, which will not serve the Designs of the Church of Rome.

As for what follows about the *Gates of Hell not prevailing against the Church*; I have already given an account of that; for the *Gates of Hell* never prevail, while there is a Church, which professes the Faith which St. Peter then professed, That *Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God*; which the Church of Rome herself has done in her greatest Corruptions, excepting Pope *Liberius* his Subscription to the *Arian* Confession.

And whereas the Paper concludes with a desire to know how the Church of England is *Catholick and Apostolick*, the Answer is very plain; Because her Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline is *Catholick and Apostolick*.

The Paper

T H E

T H E CONCLUSION.

*An Address to wavering Protestants,
shewing what little Reason they have
to think of any Change of their Reli-
gion.*

WHAT I have now discoursed in Answer to these Pa-
pers, seems to me so very clear and plain, that I
should not much question its good effect, even up-
on honest Papists, would they impartially read and consider
it, much more upon wavering Protestants, if it be only some
Scruples, not Interest, which sways them. But the better to fix
such People, and that in the Modern fashionable way, with-
out disputing all the Points in controversy, I shall desire them
to consider, How much more Certainty and Safety they have
in Communion with the Church of *England*, than they can
have by going over to the Church of *Rome*. And I think
this is home to the purpose; it being the same Argument,
wherewith the *Roman* Priests endeavour to pervert our Peo-
ple; and which is the principal design of these Papers.

I. First then I observe, That all the positive Articles of the
Protestant Faith are owned and believed in the Church of
Rome; we do not believe all that they believe, but yet they be-
lieve all that we do; for our Faith is contained in the ancient
Creeds, the Apostles, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanasian* Creeds,
which the Church of *Rome* owns, as well as we. And though
we do not build our Certainty on the Authority of the
Church of *Rome*, but on the express Revelations of Scripture,
which contain all the Articles of our Faith, and is as much
Certainty as we desire; yet methinks even a modest *Romanist*
should

should blush to charge our Faith with Uncertainty, when our Faith, as far as it reaches, is the same with theirs. Surely they must grant, that in these matters, which we all consent in, our Faith is true and orthodox; they must grant, that the last Resolution of our Faith into the Authority of Christ and his Apostles, is sound and orthodox also; for thus they resolve their own Faith: They must grant that the Universal Consent of the Church in all Ages, not excluding the Church of *Rome* it self, as a part of the Catholick Church, is the best External Testimony of the Christian Faith. Now when we believe the same things which the Church of *Rome* does, upon the Authority of Christ and his Apostles, whose Doctrine is contained in the Writings of the New Testament, and expounded by the General Faith of the Christian Church in all Ages, what appearance of Uncertainty can be charged on such a Faith? We reject indeed the infallible Authority of the present Church of *Rome*; but what then? Will not a true orthodox Faith save us, unless we believe in Christ upon the Authority of a particular Church, which had no being, when Christianity was first planted in the world?

But I think, I need not insist on this; for I cannot believe that any Member of the Church of *England* goes over to the Church of *Rome*, because he cannot believe his Creed in the Church of *England*. But then I would desire them to consider what that Uncertainty is which they complain of in the Church of *England*; for if the positive Faith of the Church of *England* is certain, as it must be, if the Faith of the Church of *Rome*, as to these Matters, be certain, why do they leave us for want of Certainty, which is now the Popular Argument to seduce men from our Communion? If they think, we do not believe enough, let them say so, and make that the cause of their departure from us; but if, as far as our Faith goes, we have certain and evident Reasons of our Faith, how does our Faith come to be uncertain?

As for those particular Doctrines, which are in dispute between us and the Church of *Rome*, we grant we have no certainty of them; nay, more than that, we say no man can be certain of them, how confident soever he is; for they are founded neither on Reason nor Scripture, nor any good Authority, (for we do not take the Authority of the present Church

Church of *Rome* to be good Authority) and if this be all they mean by our uncertainty, that we have no certainty for the worship of Saints and Images and Relicks, for Transubstantiation, and the Adoration of the Host, for Prayers in an unknown Tongue, for Masses for the Living and the Dead; for a Judicial Absolution, and those new Sacraments they have introduced into the Church, we readily grant it; but think this a very strange Reason for Protestants to desert our Communion, because we have no certainty of things, which we believe to be false. We do not only confess, that we can find no certainty for these things, but we assert that we have positive and certain Evidence against them; and those who have a mind to believe such Doctrines as these, must go over to the Church of *Rome* to enlarge and improve their Faith, for we shall never believe them. But if they can be contented with the Faith which the Scriptures teach, and which the Primitive Church professed, we have as much Evidence and Certainty for that, as the Church of *Rome* her self has; and how they can better themselves by going over to the Church of *Rome*, as to these Points, I cannot tell, since we believe as orthodoxly as they.

Secondly, As for those Doctrines and Practices which we reject, because we have no Evidence for them, but only the Authority of the Church of *Rome*, which is no Evidence to us, because it is not evident it self, we think our selves much safer in rejecting, than we could be in owning them; and that for this plain Reason, that though we should be mistaken in rejecting such Doctrines (as we are very certain we are not) yet they are such Mistakes, as do no Injury to common Christianity, no dishonour to our common Saviour, and therefore cannot be dangerous to our Souls; whereas if the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of *Rome* be, as we say they are, Innovations and Corruptions of Christianity, they are very dangerous and fatal Corruptions. As to shew this in some few Instances.

What Injury is it to Christianity, not to believe the Infallibility of the Pope or Council, while we believe Christ and his Apostles to be infallible, which is Infallibility enough to direct the Christian Church? For while we adhere to what they taught, we can neither believe too little nor too much;

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but if we believe the Infallibility of the Pope, we are bound to stand to his Authority, and to receive all his Dictates without examination, and how dangerous is this, if he should prove not to be infallible, for then he may lead us into damnable Errors, and we have no way to get out of them.

While we own the Supremacy of our Saviour, who is the Head of his Church, and of all Principalities and Powers; and the Authority of Bishops and Pastors to govern the Church under Christ; what does the Church suffer by denying the Supremacy of the Pope, when Sovereign Princes and Bishops may govern their several Churches, as well or better without him? This indeed destroys the Papal Monarchy; but Christ is King still, and the Church is never the worse Church, because it is not an universal Monarchy, which Christ never intended it should be. But if we give the Supremacy to the Pope, and he has no right to it by Christ's Institution; this is an invasion upon the Right of all the Christian Bishops in the world, makes it impossible for them to govern or reform their own Churches, whatever occasion there be, without leave from the Pope, which very thing has hindered the Reformation of the Church of Rome it self these last Ages, when it has been so earnestly pressed both by Christian Princes and Bishops of that Communion; witness the management of Affairs in the Council of Trent. Nay, this is an invasion on the Rights of Sovereign Princes, to set a Superior over them in their own Dominions, who can command their Subjects with a more Sacred Authority; and how fatal this may prove to Princes, and what a Snare and Temptation to Subjects, some Examples of former Ages may satisfy us.

Suppose we should be mistaken about the lawfulness of *Praying to Saints*, the Church of Rome her self does not pretend, that it is necessary to do it, and therefore we want nothing necessary to Salvation by not doing it; and certainly our Saviour cannot think it any injury to his Mediation, that we so wholly rely upon his Intercession, that we desire no other Advocates, and that we are so jealous of his Glory, that we will not admit the most glorious Saints to the least Partnership with him; and this will make him our Advocate in deed, when he sees we will have no other. But if he be our only Mediator and Advocate by God's appointment,

and his own purchase, let those who unnecessarily apply themselves to so many other Mediators, consider how our only Mediator will like it.

Suppose it were lawful to worship God or Christ by *Images*, which we think expressly forbid by the second Commandment; yet will they say, *That it is an affront or injury to God and our Saviour, to worship him without Images?* If that lovely Idea we have of God in our minds; if the remembrance of what Christ has done and suffered for us, make us truly and sincerely, and passionately devout, what need have we of an Image, which is pretended only to be a help to Devotion, and therefore of no use to those, who can be devout without it? But he who considers what God's Jealousie means, must needs think it dangerous to worship the Images of God and Christ, and the Saints, for fear they should be forbid by the second Commandment, which all the wit of man can never prove that they are not.

Though *Latin Prayers* were lawful in *English Congregations*, who do not understand them, yet is it unlawful to pray in *English*? Is it any dishonour to God, any injury to Religion, that men pray with their Understandings? If true worship begins in the Mind, and our Understandings must govern our Affections, I should fear, that to pray without understanding what I prayed, would not be accepted by that God, who is the Father of Spirits, and must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth.

If we believe, That Christ once offering himself upon the Cross, was a Sufficient Sacrifice, Propitiation and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, what injury do we to the Sacrifice of Christ, though we do not believe, that he is offered again every day in ten Thousand Masses? If we believe, that in the Supper of our Lord we eat the Sacramental Body, and drink the Sacramental Blood of Christ, which by his own Institution do as really and effectually convey to us all the benefits of his Death and Passion, as if we could eat his Natural Flesh, and drink his Blood, what injury does the Church suffer by denying *Transubstantiation*? And if when we approach his holy Table, we worship Christ in Heaven, sitting on the right Hand of God, is not this as true an Honour to our Saviour, as to worship him under the Species of Bread? But if *Transub-*

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Sanctification be false, what a hazard does that man run, who worships a piece of *Bread*, which the most Learned *Romanists* themselves grant to be Idolatry.

If we believe, That Christ alone has a Judicial Power to forgive Sins, and that the Church has a Ministerial Authority, to take in or shut out of the Church, which is the only state of Pardon and Salvation, and therefore is a Ministerial remitting or retaining of Sins, and sufficient to all the ends of Ecclesiastical Authority, is not this as much Pardon and Forgiveness as any Christian has need of, though we deny, that the Priest has a Judicial or Pretorian Authority to forgive sins, which is not compatible to any Creature? For what can any man desire more, than to be put into a state of Pardon and Forgiveness in this World, and to be finally acquitted and absolved in the next? But if the Priest have no such Judicial Authority to forgive Sins, what a fatal Mistake is it for men to rely on such an ineffectual Absolution? What a miserable surprize will it be, for those who thought themselves pardoned by the Priest to be condemned by Christ?

Though we deny such a place as *Purgatory*, is not the fear of *Hell* as good an Argument to bring men to Repentance? Or does it lessen the Mercies of God, or the hope of Sinners, to say, That God remits all future Punishments, when he remits the Sin? But if the hopes of expiating their Sins in *Purgatory*, and of being prayed out of it, should embolden any man in sin, what a disappointment would it be to find their *Purgatory* to be *Hell*?

This is sufficient to shew, That we can suffer nothing by denying such Doctrines as these, unless the causeless *Anathemas* of the Church of *Rome* can damn us; but the hazard is so vastly great on the other side, the Mistake will prove so fatal, if they be in a mistake, that nothing less than an infallible Certainty can justify the Prudence of such a Choice, and therefore it is not fit for such fallible Creatures, as we own our selves to be, to venture on them. We are safe as we are, and we think it best to keep our selves so, though we had no other Reason for it, but that it is good to be safe.

Thirdly, Safe I say we are in rejecting these Doctrines, unless they can prove, that by rejecting them we want something

thing necessary to Salvation. There are two things especially, wherein the Romanists think they have the advantage of us, and for the sake of which some Protestants are persuaded to forsake the Communion of the Church of *England*, for that of *Rome*. That they eat the natural Flesh of Christ in the Sacrament, and receive a Judicial Pardon of all their Sins by the Absolution of the Priest; which we confess we do not. Now suppose it were necessary to Salvation to eat the Natural Flesh of Christ, and that Christ would not forgive any man, who was not before forgiven by the Priest, yet if these be the Institutions of Christ, we have them as well as they; and no man need go out of the Church of *England* for them.

If the words of Consecration, *This is my Body*, do by the Institution of Christ transubstantiate the Bread into the Natural Flesh of Christ, these words must have the same effect, when pronounced by a Priest of the Church of *England*, as by the Church of *Rome*. And therefore if this were the Intention of our Saviour to give us his Natural Flesh to eat, we do eat it as much as they; for we eat the consecrated Elements, which are, whatever Christ intended to make them by the words of Consecration. For our not believing Transubstantiation cannot hinder the virtue of Consecration, if Christ have so appointed it; for the Institutions of our Saviour do not change their Nature with mens Opinions about them. Thus Penitents in the Church of *England* may confess their Sins to a Priest, if they please, and receive Absolution; and if by the Institution of our Saviour, this is a Judicial Absolution, then they have it, and need not go to the Church of *Rome* for it.

There are but two Objections, that I know of, that can be made against this; either that we have no true Priests and Bishops in the Church of *England*, and therefore we have no Consecration of the Elements; or that the Intention of the Priest is necessary to Consecration, and nothing more is done, than what the Priest intends to do; and therefore no Priest can Transubstantiate, but he who intends to Transubstantiate.

1. As for the first of these; If there be no true Priests and Bishops in the Church of *England*, there are none in the Church.

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Church of *Rome*; for our Bishops and Priests derive their Succession from those Bishops, who received Orders in the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and therefore have as good Orders as they could give, and as they themselves had; and if we have as true Bishops and Priests as the Church of *Rome*, we must have as perfect Sacraments as they also.

2. As for the Intention of the Priest; That in the Church of *Rome* signifies no more, than to intend to do what the Church does; and why is not intending to do what Christ does, as good and perfect an Intention as this? And thus we all intend to do what Christ did; which is all the Intention that can be necessary to Consecration, unless the private Opinion of the Priest can alter the nature of the Institution. But the Truth is, If the Church of *Rome* depends upon the Intention of the Priest for Consecration, no Papist can ever be sure that the Bread is consecrated, and then to be sure it is not transubstantiated; and therefore, I think, they may compound this business, and allow us *Transubstantiation*, if we will allow it them. We want it not indeed, and care not for it; but those who lay so much stress upon it, need not forsake the Communion of the Church of *England* for that Reason; at least have no Reason to say, That we want any thing necessary to Salvation. Let us but observe the Institution of our Saviour, and we need not fear, but we shall receive all the Spiritual Blessings, which Christ intended to convey to us in that Sacrament; which those can never be sure of, who do not observe the Institution, but receive only a part of the Lord's Supper instead of the whole.

Were these things well considered, I persuade my self, no man would see any cause to forsake the Communion of the Church of *England*, where he has all things necessary to Salvation, without oppressing his Faith with Doctrines hard to be believed, or endangering his Soul by doubtful and suspicious Practices at best.

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